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Making sense of learning advising: an historical ontology

Alisa Percy

University of Wollongong
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Making sense of learning advising

An historical ontology

Faculty of Education
2011

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
from the University of Wollongong, Australia
Certification

I, Alisa J. Percy, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Alisa J. Percy
23 September 2011
Abstract

This thesis is concerned with making sense of the discursive complexity of the learning advisor in Australian higher education. It considers how learning advising, rather than the sensible and unitary field of practice it is often taken to be, constitutes a professional complex that is the effect of the saturation of historical, political, theoretical and institutional layers of meaning that continue to have salience in the academy today. In this thesis, learning advising is shown to be a contested space crossed with multiple truths, whose practitioners are both enabled and derailed by the contingent discourses that frame their intelligibility and ethical agency in the academy.

Written in the spirit of a Foucauldian ‘history of the present’ (Foucault, 1977), the thesis takes the form of an historical ontology (Foucault 1997a, 1997b) that examines the learning advisor as an effect of the dynamic interaction between power, knowledge and ethics in the academy. Conceptually, it uses the lens of governmentality to consider how the learning advisor can be understood as deeply embedded in the social regulation of conduct in the academy. Through this lens, the constitution of the learning advising subject is examined as an effect of the constellation of historical circumstance, political reasoning and social and institutional exigencies. These factors combine to reconfigure the university as an apparatus of government in a liberal society; problematise specific aspects of higher education; and (re)present the subject of higher education – the student – as the object of government. It is argued that these constellations also create the discursive space for historically different versions of the learning advisor to appear, and that these different versions are present in the layers of truth found in the professional narrative today.

Methodologically, the thesis combines genealogical design with archaeological method to isolate, trace and juxtapose four historical constitutions of the subject of learning advising that can be shown to have continued salience in the academy today. This is achieved by drawing together the analysis of the historical archive - comprising international reports on higher education, government policy, educational research, and learning advising publications - with the voices of learning advisors in the present. Data obtained through semi-structured interviews with learning advisors is used to demonstrate how key aspects of each historical constitution can be found in the way learning advisors make sense of themselves in the
present. This thesis highlights how these various constitutions can be seen to be discontinuous and, as such, create a complex of contradictory truths – a discursive complexity and an ontological stammering – for the learning advisor in the present.

Importantly, this thesis engages with the normalising tendencies in the field’s political and professional ‘will to truth’ that corresponds directly with its recent professionalisation in Australia. The thesis is founded on the idea that while professionalisation might be regarded as an important political step to professional autonomy and growth, this thesis suggests that learning advising, as an emerging field of practice in the academy, be wary of too readily grounding its politics in truth and the desire to secure identity. Truth and identity in this thesis are shown to be contingent, shifting and always worthy of critique. Rather, I propose the need for a politics that does not pursue the search for a foundational subject or an attachment to fixed ideals, but engages in intellectual work that renders visible the fractures in our contingencies and histories, and troubles not only the stories we receive, but those we tell. This thesis is one attempt to do this kind of work.
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Acronyms

CTEC Commonwealth Tertiary Education Committee
DEET Department of Employment, Education and Training
DETYA Department of Training and Youth Affairs
DEST Department of Science and Technology
DEEWR Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
AUQA Australian Universities Quality Agency
LAS Language and Academic Skills
NLAS National Language and Academic Skills
ALL Academic Language and Learning
MASUS Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The context

The thesis is concerned with making sense of the discursive complexity of the learning advisor in contemporary Australian higher education. It is written in the spirit of a Foucauldian ‘history of the present’ (Foucault, 1977) and takes the form of an historical ontology (Foucault 1997a, 1997b). It begins with the understanding that while student learning assistance, or learning advising, tends to be recognised as a relatively unitary and sensible field of practice in the academy today, attempts to make sense of the field ontologically (what it is), epistemologically (what it knows), and axiologically (what it does) reveal a fractured surface of identity, a condition I will refer to as the ‘learning advising complex’. The argument put forward in this thesis is that this professional complex can be understood as an effect of the saturation of historical, political, theoretical and institutional layers of meaning pertaining to academic student learning assistance that continue to have salience in the academy today. Further, as these layers tend to be the product of shifting rationalities and power/knowledge relationships at the international, national and institutional level, their continued salience in the present creates for the learning advisor a paradox of multiple intelligibilities whose tensions resist foreclosure. In making sense of the learning advising complex, my aim is to acknowledge the dispersion of what constitutes truth in the field while conceding that any such analysis can only ever be partial.

To begin to paint a picture of the learning advising complex, learning advising practitioners arrive, often ‘by accident’, from a variety of pathways with diverse qualifications and experience to operate in an environment where: their work is often cast in both academic and service terms; they may be deployed, just as one example, to teach ‘generic learning skills’, ‘academic literacy’ and/ or ‘remedial English language’; and where academic literacy, for example, is recognised as a moral imperative and a marketable commodity, a remediable ‘skill’ and a developmental capacity, the responsibility of the student, the responsibility of the learning advisor, the responsibility of the discipline academic and the responsibility of the curriculum. The tensions between the various histories and rationalities that underpin these multiple understandings keep learning advisors in an ambiguous space, floating between the margins and the centre, between the student, the faculty and the institution, between a liberal
notion of equity and the values of the marketplace, between fixing the problem, changing the culture, and constantly reinventing themselves.

What marks this field of practitioners is their very ‘in betweenness’ – their diversity, ambiguity and vulnerability – combined with their professional will to tell the truth about themselves in ways that gain authority and stability in the academy. Theirs is a history of attempting to find their place, their space, and in their ‘will to truth’, a description of who they are and why they are here. The remaining introduction offers a provisional definition of the subject of this study (Section 1.2); sketches the first of two illustrations of the ‘learning advising complex’ (Section 1.3); provides the overall rationale for the thesis (Section 1.4); presents an overview of the critique undertaken in the thesis (Section 1.5); and outlines how the thesis will proceed (Section 1.6).

1.2 The provisional subject

As a provisional definition of the subject of the study, learning advisors are defined as those practitioners employed in universities as ‘student learning assistance’ (16.8.4 DEEWR National Guidelines, MCEETYA, 2007), whose broad job description is to provide concurrent learning, language, literacy and/or numeracy assistance to enrolled students. These practitioners may be either academic or general staff; they may be located in a central unit or within faculty; they may work entirely with students, and/or with the curriculum and discipline staff, but they have ‘traditionally’ had a specific student learning, language, literacy and numeracy focus. Learning advisors operate under a number of titles, including study skills advisors, learning skills counsellors, learning development lecturers, skills advisors, language and learning lecturers and academic skills advisors. Courting the idea of professionalisation in the 1990s, learning advisors began referring to themselves as Language and Academic Skills (LAS) professionals, which became Academic Language and Learning (ALL) with the establishment of a formal professional association in 2007.

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1 This is distinct from the work of academic and educational developers, whose focus on teacher professionalism, the scholarship of teaching and learning and the curriculum will be shown to overlap historically with aspects of learning advising work.

2 Association of Academic Language and Learning, www.aall.org.au
At a theoretical level, however, the term ‘subject’ in this thesis identifies a more complex phenomenon than this provisional definition confers. The use of the term ‘subject’ refers to a set of three interrelated meanings. Predominantly, the subject of learning advising refers to the ontological status of the practitioner as ‘ethical agent’ in the academy. The second meaning refers to the epistemological substance of learning advising or the ‘content’ of learning advising practice. The third meaning refers to the higher education student, the subject of higher education as ‘the object of practice’ (Soloman, 2008). Using the lens of governmentality, this latter meaning acknowledges that governing assumes a particular identity of the governed (Dean, 1999); the subject is an implicit dimension of government. The rationale and purpose for using the ‘subject’ in this way will be elaborated further in Chapter Three, Section 3.2, but first it is important to illustrate what is intended by the use of the term ‘discursive complexity’ and ‘the learning advising complex’.

1.3 The learning advising complex

Despite the formation of the Association of Academic Language and Learning (AALL) in 2007, and a position statement produced within the field a number of years prior (Carmichael, Hicks, McGowan, & Van der Wal, 1999), scratching the surface of collective identity reveals a field of practice characterised by multiplicity in every facet of its existence: the individual, institutional, intellectual, practical, philosophical, cultural, social and political. I describe this condition as the ‘learning advising complex’, and I argue that this condition induces a certain kind of ‘ontological stammering’ (Lather, 2003), whereby telling the truth about the subject of learning advising necessarily involves contingency and paradox. It is the discursive complexity of learning advising and its concomitant ontological stammering that constitutes the ‘problem’ in the present with which this thesis engages.

To demonstrate the ontological stammering in the field of learning advising, the following discussion thread - about a job advertisement for a learning advisor taken from the AALL website in 2007 – provides a glimpse of the multiple and paradoxical nature of ‘truth’ as it pertains to the identity/expertise of the learning advisor in the present.³

³ A further illustration of the learning advising complex produced from interview data can be found in the counter-narrative provided in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.
Thread Initiator [TI]

I was disturbed by the essential qualifications required for the casual positions advertised at [X university] on four grounds: 1) the limited range of degree backgrounds specified; 2) the perception of what constitutes an appropriate degree for a 'learning' adviser; 3) the failure to require any experience in tertiary teaching; and 4) the low level of appointment.

The advertisement seems to be a backward step for the professional status of AALL advisers. Most (all?) of the figures who have been instrumental in the development of this profession over the years by way of solid publications, etc. have not come from any of the specified degree backgrounds! Surely that leaves room for thought.

Respondent 1 [R1]

Yes, I'm quite surprised, too [TI], especially re the professional qualifications. What makes someone with a background in Psychology, for example, more qualified than someone with a background in Sociology or Art History or Biology?

I have been taught by some people with an Education background who are positively awful teachers! Having a background in any of the specified areas is no guarantee of quality teaching. Surely much of the strength of what AALL units do comes from the range of backgrounds that we bring to the profession.

And I'm often amazed at the failure to make teaching experience an essential requirement in job ads for AALL advisers. In fact, you'd think that AALL advising -- rather than teaching experience in general -- would be an essential requirement, but often it's not! Bizarre!

Here we are trying to create a profession for ourselves and yet we're closing off so many avenues to its development! These are big issues that I think we need to think very carefully about if we are to move our profession forwards and not have it subsumed by areas such as behavioural science or social work.

Respondent 2 [R2]

To give [the university under discussion] some space, the disciplines of psychology, behavioural science, social work or education were given as
examples, and the relevance of the degree was the essential criterion. As long as [the university] can see that undergraduate degrees in geology and Chinese and a doctorate in history and philosophy of science (or art history, linguistics, biology etc.) are relevant, then there is no problem.

I agree that the spread of disciplines amongst learning advisers in Australasia is what gives the profession strength, but it is also its weakness. The perceived lack of specialisation of the knowledge involved causes academics outside the learning adviser role, who themselves are all specialists publishing in specialist journals, to consider learning advice to be somehow not quite academically kosher, and thus often consider us to be just administrative staff. From experience, I would argue that such a perception becomes more difficult if we publish in world renowned journals, no matter what the subject area.

**Respondent 1**

Yes, that's an interesting point [TI] -- the one about the lack of specialist knowledge and I think it's essential that we really start to carve out a niche for ourselves for what we do. It's certainly something that is a profession in and of itself -- and arguably not one that is benefitted by having one disciplinary background over another.

**Thread Initiator**

Take your point [R2], but it is still significant that [the university] (whoever designed the ad) should see those specific disciplines as somehow representative.

I'm not convinced that the variety of educational backgrounds leads to 'weakness' of any sort. One of the most stimulating things about working in [this Centre] has been this very variety. Nothing like applying different problem-solving techniques acquired in different disciplines to cross-disciplinary challenges arising in the AALL advisory context--certainly extends one! And, of course, there are still the other points I made. Perhaps too there is a need to define what is actually meant by 'learning' adviser.

**Respondent 3**

I've followed this thread with interest. There is benefit in drawing from all disciplines, but I find it curious that Applied Linguistics/TESOL qualifications and experience are not mentioned in [the university's] ad.
**Respondent 1**

[Respondent 3] and [new discussant] have started a related thread in the Research (requests for help) Forum. I suggest members also have a look there.

**Respondent 4**

Is this information something we could add to [AALL’s] table relating to LAS across Australian universities? I would be happy to do that if it seemed like a reasonable thing to do.

**Respondent 5**

In response to [TI’s] concerns over the limited range of degree backgrounds specified in the [university] ad I am wondering who is contributing to such narrow and misleading discipline areas as being representative of who we are. If this is coming from within our own community then perhaps we need to get our act together and come up with some ideas and formats for such positions. If it is just sloppy imposition from outside our area, we perhaps need to be awake and inform/educate those areas. It is my experience that selection criteria such as these are used in the first instance to exclude those that do not immediately conform to the strict criteria. Therefore such exemplars are dangerous in their boundary setting in the hands of who go by the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law. Certainly to select appropriate degrees for a 'learning' adviser contains assumptions and a disciplining of who we are that I would challenge, particularly as it relates to experience in tertiary teaching and the ability to cross a wide range of disciplines.

In terms of the low level of appointment that [TI] identifies, I ask whether this is a low level of appointment for that centre or that university? If it is not then we can hardly criticise the ad. If it is then who is making such a decision and on what basis? Additionally, is the appointment low compared to other universities? I do not know, but it is lower than such positions in my workplace. If we believe that our positions should be at a higher level then it would be useful to have a stronger argument to support that position - particularly in view of the Monash experience.

Indeed, the issues raised cast doubt on the extent we qualify for professional status across Australian universities or, at least, to what extent we can make a strong case to our university management that we so qualify - that we make a difference to the particular missions of our university, and this can vary greatly between different universities.
There is a certain pattern in this discussion thread which is revealing about truth telling in the field. It can be argued that there is a regularity in the way the contributors share a deep concern about the identity and status of the ALL\textsuperscript{5} profession – that is, they are united in their will to self-justification - but at the same time each contribution scratches at the surface of collective identity revealing disparity rather than a shared understanding. The regularity of discourse within the learning advising field, thus, lies more in the desire of its practitioners to tell the truth about the field than in the regularity or unity of the truth itself.

A close reading of the discussion thread can be used to identify just some of the competing truths embedded in the learning advising context: for example, we are excellent teachers from disciplinary backgrounds / we are not psychologists / we are educationists / we are definitely not educationists / we are language specialists; we need to close our boundaries / we need to avoid closing our boundaries; we should be experts in our respective fields / we should articulate expertise in this field; diversity is our strength / diversity is our weakness; we have specialist knowledge / we have no specialist knowledge; we know who we are / we need to figure out who we are.\textsuperscript{6} The discussion slips across these tensions in the ALL field without overt acknowledgement, a slippage that can be read either as a refusal to acknowledge paradox or an already embedded openness to difference. Either way, this demonstrates that making sense of learning advising is no simple task.

\textsuperscript{4} This thread petered out around the technological glitches when attempting to upload documents to the newly formed AALL website/ discussion forum. The offshoot thread in the Research (requests for help) Forum involved a very brief discussion about the postgraduate qualifications of LAS staff. The data from the cited research project (Milnes, 2005) indicated that ‘sixteen LAS/AALL centres responded, with information about the qualifications of 137 staff. 62% had a graduate qualification: 20 people with a PhD and 64 with an MA (research or coursework). Some indicated that they were working on a PhD’. Nothing was mentioned about knowledge/ expertise/ specialisation.

\textsuperscript{5} While the term Academic Language and Learning (ALL) is used here to denote the profession in the present, the thesis will revert to the generic term of ‘learning advising’ as it moves into the historical analysis.

\textsuperscript{6} A similar analysis of competing truths in the field of academic development can be found in Lee & McWilliam (2008).


1.4 The rationale

The problem

The motivating force for this thesis is the need to learn how to live with the discursive complexity of learning advising in the present. The learning advising complex arose as a professional puzzle for me personally having been inducted into a particular philosophy of practice in the 1990s that was already beginning to stutter with its own impossibilities. For some, the role was only too clear: learning advisors were agents of change transforming the culture of the university by working collaboratively with faculty academics to integrate and embed the disembedded - generic skills, tertiary literacy and/or academic literacy instruction into the mainstream curriculum (see Chanock, 1994b; Golebiowski, 1997; Skillen, Merten, Trivett, & Percy, 1999; Webb, 2001). Based on social and functional theories of language and organisational change theory, this project was underpinned by a faith in progressive reason and the agency of the learning advisor to induce change in the ‘culture’ of the disciplines and the university. Theoretically, working with early adopters and making victories visible would induce an influx of invitations from other academics who would see the self-evident benefits of these collaborative practices. Through this process, it was believed: that the university would eventually come to its senses about the central role of language in learning; that more explicit language development would become central to disciplinary teaching; and that learning advisors would be full partners in the realisation of this goal. That was over fourteen years ago.

The lived experience of this ‘agency’ became a point of contention as the logic underpinning these so-called ‘progressive’ practices came to appear far less self-evident. The theoretical logic of collaboration and expansion was displaced by the experience of collaboration and disintegration. Rather than linear progress, it appeared that the learning advising trajectory was far more Sisyphean: marked by rupture, repetition, discontinuity and reversal - small victories, great disappointments, and an overwhelming sense of ‘groundhog day’.

Further, the role of change agent appeared to be in conflict with another prevailing and persistently expected role, the role of the learning advisor as the agent of redemption – for the lost soul, the student in transition, the problem student, the student at risk - the safe house for
the under-confident, the poorly skilled and linguistically under-prepared. This presented as a disorienting ‘agentic complex’ that was difficult to unravel, and resulted for me personally in an ‘ontological stammering’ (Lather, 2003) with which it was difficult to work. Disillusionment led me to consider how I might think differently about the work I was doing. As Foucault (1984) suggests,

> There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (p8)

What made this work more urgent was my deepening professional melancholia that had begun to disturb my ability to care about my work, my students and my professional self. Brown (1999, 2001, 2006) suggests that melancholy is the counter-productive state of being that sets in when one’s attachment to a political or cultural ideal becomes experienced as a loss that is irreplaceable.7 Brown’s work on ‘left melancholy’, or life after the promise of revolution, resonates with my own project. My work engages with life in learning advising after the telos and ethical remit of change agency is revealed as ‘a cruel hoax’ (Brown, 2001, p144). Personally and professionally, I am compelled to seek an alternative reading of the present. As a personal project of freedom, my work is concerned with making sense of those attachments that persist and sustain a melancholic and complacent attitude towards the present.

Therefore, this thesis is undertaken as a self-reflexive engagement with a professional field, which on the one hand I have come to call my own, and on the other, has come to make less rather than more sense to me as I pursue it as a career. I locate myself centrally in this research, and employ the deconstructive possibilities offered by a feminist post-structuralist perspective and a post-foundational theory of discourse in order to develop ‘a more provisional, historical and ethical understanding of agency’ (Britzman, 2000, p36). In particular, I draw inspiration from the work of Lather (1993), St Pierre (1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 2004) and Britzman (2000), who are concerned with making sense of how regimes of truth frame the intelligibility of the subject, and whose ethics of inquiry draws on Foucault’s

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7 Melancholy is distinct from mourning, which is a far more productive state for seeking new possibilities (Brown, 1999, 2001, 2006). This distinction will be taken up further in Chapter Six.
incitement to write in order ‘to get free of oneself’ - where getting free of oneself involves ‘an attempt to understand the "structures of intelligibility" (Britzman, 1995, p156) that limit thought…’ (St Pierre, 1997a, p403).

I, therefore, pursue this work as an embodied, partial, self-conscious and political ‘incitement to discourse’ (Lather, 1993, p674). Importantly, Lather’s ‘fertile obsession’ with post-foundational approaches to validity would ask you to judge this body of work and its contribution to knowledge, not in terms of its proximity to truth or capacity for closure, but in terms of its ‘voluptuousness’; that is, its capacity to construct ‘a politics and epistemology of positionality’ (Lather, 1993, p674) and create an opening for other partial voices to enter the conversation.

The approach – historical ontology

In undertaking this thesis, I sought a way of making sense of the discursive complexity of the learning advisor as one means for making sense of the multiple and competing demands made on me as an institutional practitioner. I wanted to do this in a way that identified the diversity and ambiguity of learning advising work as a source of freedom rather than the cause of despair.⁸ I therefore required a form of critique that would allow for scholarly engagement with the politics of truth and forms of reasoning in the field, a form of critique that could work with dispersion rather than unity and open up tensions rather than paper them over.⁹ Such a critique proved possible using the insights and approaches offered by Foucault, who encourages ‘a philosophical ethos consisting in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing, through a historical ontology of ourselves’ (Foucault, 1984, p45). Foucault introduced the notion of historical ontology in ‘What is critique?’ (Foucault, 1997d), which he elaborated further in ‘What is enlightenment?’ (Foucault, 1984, 1997e).

Historical ontology has been applied in the work of Ian Hacking (2002), who points to the lack of attention that historical ontology has gained from the followers of Foucault’s work, ⁸ Brown (2001, p5) discusses the low-lying despair that accompanies late modern-life – ‘a despair about the very capacity to grasp our condition and craft our future’. ⁹ Scholarly engagement with the politics of truth can also be found in the field of educational development in Australia and overseas (see, for example, Grant, et al., 2009 ; Land, 2004; Lee, Manathunga, & Kandlbinder, 2008; Lee & McWilliam, 2008; Manathunga, 2007; Peseta, et al., 2005)
suggesting that most turn to genealogy as the approach of choice in the examination of the subject. And yet genealogy and historical ontology are by no means dissimilar. Where genealogy is primarily concerned with tracing the effect of power on the body along the axes of knowledge, power and the self, historical ontology traces how we ‘have become moral agents, through constituting ourselves as moral agents in quite specific, local, historical ways’ (Hacking, 2002, p3). Historical ontology interprets the genealogical self as a self-constituted moral agent – its axes of analysis, therefore, are knowledge, power and ethics.

I have selected this analytical perspective because the moral agency of the learning advisor is a deeply embedded aspect of our identity which I believe requires further interrogation. To elaborate, one of the most salient claims of the learning advisor is that we ‘make a difference’ to students, to the quality of teaching and learning, and to our institutions. The large majority of learning advisors interviewed for this thesis referred to their work as ‘making a difference’. For this reason, the phrase ‘to make a difference’ will be used regularly from the perspective of the learning advisors’ intentions. It is perhaps no coincidence that this phrase overlaps with Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett’s (1982) book Making the Difference: the context of its publication, the intent of its authors and the nature of the research with its focus on gender and class as important socio-cultural factors impacting on educational outcomes resonates strongly with all educational practitioners whose remit and ethical agency is framed in terms of social justice. Indeed, it will be illustrated how learning advising, as it is recognised today, emerged through the convergence of political, economic, social and intellectual forces that formed the struts upon which specialised fields of ‘educational’ expertise designed to ‘make a difference’ became intelligible.

It is possible, therefore, to argue that ‘making a difference’ is something of a professional birth right of the learning advisor. Learning advising can be said to have grown up in the 1970s out of counselling and remedial English services to establish itself as a ‘progressive’ field of practices concerned with equity and social justice through the development of students’ literacy and learning ‘skills’. However, despite the moral integrity embedded in the idea of ‘making a difference’, a more apt analysis is that we are compelled to work with difference; indeed, we emerged as the by-product of the academy’s anxiety over managing difference. From this perspective I ask, ‘What is the nature of difference that we are called to act upon in the academy? How has difference as defined by particular regimes of truth about the university and the higher education student produced what is considered to be an
intelligible identity for the learning advisor? And how have we been invited to constitute ourselves as ethical agents in the academy?’ Locating learning advisors in the interstices between discourses of domination and discourses of the self I ask, ‘What difference are we invited to make?’

In this sense, writing an historical ontology constitutes a political project: it is critical work that problematises the most sacred claims of the profession in order to identify, transgress, and in the end, live ethically within its limits. Beginning with the ontological question, ‘What is the learning advisor in this particular historical moment?’, I ask, ‘How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge, as subjects who exercise and submit to power, and as moral subjects of our own actions?’ (Foucault, 1984, p49)

Importantly, historical ontology examines the constitution of the learning advising subject in its discursive, political and moral relationship with the university and the student. This three-way relationship is analysed according to the problematisation of the academy as an apparatus of government, the representation of the student as an object of government, and the appearance of the learning advisor as a technology of reform/intervention. I suggest that when we view the learning advisor as a technology of reform/performance for the government of conduct in the academy, we can see how this figure can only make sense at the intersection of a constellation of historical circumstance, political rationality and regimes of truth that (re)configure the university as an apparatus of government and (re)constitute student subjectivity as the object of government. Taking an historical perspective, we are able to see more clearly how this intelligibility becomes complicated when historical and sedimented understandings become overlaid across time and are lived out in the daily experiences of the practitioner in the present.

*The focus – games of truth*

As one means for articulating questions of politics and ethics in the field, I examine learning advising in its relationship to the truth. Such a move requires a certain perspective on the nature of truth; that is, it recognises truth as an historically unstable effect of knowledge and power relations - an effect of ever-present truth games. I am concerned with examining how learning advisors ‘are continually in the process of constituting themselves as ethical subjects
through both technologies of the self and ethical self-constitution’ (Besley, 2005, p79) against the backdrop of those material regimes of truth that seek to dominate our existence ‘as subjects in relation to new practices of government’ (Foucault, 1988 in Burchell, 1996, p31). I am, therefore, concerned with how particular versions of the truth about difference, identity and practice have invited learning advisors to tell the truth about themselves and constitute themselves as ethical agents in the academy in particular ways.

To do this, I must examine the ‘truth’ about learning advising against the backdrop of the strategic field of power relations in which it is engaged (Foucault, 1980a). Making sense of the field in this thesis thus attempts to ‘glimpse a sense that is overlooked by representational thought and the will to truth… to glimpse the sense of sense, or the sense of sensible statements as such, which underlies any statement and allows it to “make sense”’ (Widder, 2004, p425). Such an approach involves a theoretical and political analysis of the shifting historical and discursive conditions that have rendered particular versions of the learning advisor intelligible, and of identifying how the learning advising subject ‘enter[s] into such games and play[s] them to best advantage’ (Peters, 2004, p57).

An examination of how learning advisors engage in the games of truth requires, as Connolly (1991) suggests, an examination of the tactics of self-identity,

…by exploring the means by which one has become constituted as what one is, by probing the structures that maintain the plausibility of these configurations, and by analysing from a perspective that problematises the certainty of one’s self-identity and the effects these structures and tactics have on others. (pp9-10)

On a political level, this kind of examination involves tracing ‘the limiting conditions’ that enable and constrain a particular identity of the learning advisor (Simons, 1995, p2), and in doing so, qualifies the will to truth by affirming the necessarily interpretative, ‘limited, porous, and problematic character’ of any effort to determine identity. On an ethical level, it works upon those forces engaged in boundary work that would seek to petrify truth and Foreclos on difference and complexity within the field: as Widder (2004) suggests

It is well known that the erection of the boundaries that separate such collectives from what they are not has as its cost the erasure of any number of complexities…., in many ways repeating the violence of the forms of power being contested. (p427)
There is some urgency for this kind of work now as some in the field begin to move on the notion of professional qualifications and training for the learning advisor (see for example, Stevenson & Kokkin, 2007).

Taking aim at the paradox of the present and engaging with the will to truth within the field, I consider what an ethics of existence might look like if we recognise the truth about the learning advisor as contingent on knowledge, power and ethics in the academy. This thesis, therefore, locates itself both interior to and exterior to the professions’ will to truth by developing an historical ontology that examines the dispersion of truths that have come to operate in and on the field as one means for a productive engagement with the various ways the profession makes sense to its institution and makes sense of itself. The importance of this work is not in its capacity to reflect the entirety of the perspectives and practices that make up the professional field, but in its capacity to produce a partial, but coherent perspective that might sharpen our critical stance towards the present (Dean, 1999).

Towards this end, this thesis makes a double move. The first is the development of an historical ontology, which brings together the lens of governmentality (Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996; Foucault, 1980b; Gordon, 1991), genealogical techniques (Foucault, 1977a) and selected methodological principles of archaeology (Foucault, 1972) to destabilise the will to truth in the field by demonstrating the contingency of truth and identity. This is achieved by isolating four distinct discursive ‘developments’ in the historical constitution of the learning advisor and tracing their emergence and circulation. These are: a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty; an educational intervention for the social casualty; a curriculum intervention for the lifelong learner; and an administrative/ pedagogical intervention for the Graduate. These four ‘developments’ emerge from the analysis and are presented here as one possible historical ontology. The surface of emergence for each ‘development’ is traced according to the convergence of historical circumstance, political rationality and the production of knowledge that reconfigures the university as an apparatus of government and reconstitutes the higher education student as an object of government.

Rather than providing a definitive history, this work reveals that learning advising is a field of practice profoundly embedded in the social regulation of conduct in the academy, and that what constitutes a ‘sensible’ identity, and how learning advisors make sense to their institution and of themselves, is contingent on the nexus of knowledge, power and ethics.
which frame the games of truth in which they participate. For this reason, this particular ontology must be understood as one interpretation - the product of a thoroughly partial analysis of the three-way relationship between the problematisation of the academy as an apparatus of government, the representation of the student as an object of government, and the learning advisor as a technology of reform.

The second move is to respond to the question, if this is our relationship to the truth, how might we play this game differently? For example, once we recognise that we are only united by our self-justification and the argument of an identity, how might we think about the politics of identity, not as a process of liberation towards a ‘once and for all’ definition, but as a practice of freedom keeping identity in play?

1.5 Framing the critique

Within the narrative of evolutionary progress towards professionalism, the aforementioned ‘developments’ in the historical constitution of the learning advisor might appear to represent an important layering of learning advising practice from student-centred to policy-related approaches. I use a Foucauldian lens, however, to suggest that they are not ‘a culmination, but … are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations’ (Foucault, 1977a, p148). While they can be interpreted as the university coming to its senses regarding the central role of the learning advisor in facilitating learning, I suggest that these developments do not represent ‘the successive configurations of an identical meaning: rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals’ (Foucault, 1977a, p151); that is, rather than developments that constitute progress, they are interpreted as displacements that constitute deep ruptures in identity and practice.

By locating and isolating these four surfaces of emergence, I am interested in exploring how each represents both rupture and continuity in the regime of truth that frames the work of the learning advisor in the academy – how it ‘disturbs what was previously considered immobile’ (Foucault, 1977a, p147) – how it fragments and complicates the identity of the learning advisor as competing and extending discourses come to exist side by side in framing and attenuating identity and practice. I will demonstrate how learning advisors have experienced an intensification and complexification of their work as additional and competing discourses
about the higher education student’s subjectivity open up new domains of practice that layer and compete in practical, material and philosophical ways.

My aim in taking such an approach is to write against the grain. I seek to disrupt the self-evidence of arguments put forward by practitioners about the growing recognition of their work, and more specifically, I seek to trouble the perceived agency of the learning advisor in organisational and cultural change. I take issue with the claim that learning advisors function as agents of change in the academy. My study is concerned with how we can understand the agency of the learning advisor as an effect of power. I achieve this by deliberately decentring the learning advisor, their activities and theoretical developments as the object of analysis. Instead, I position learning advisors as a by-product of educational reform and view them through the lens of the production and government of the higher education student.

1.6 The scope

This thesis covers the period from the 1950s up to 2008 when the interviews with learning advisors were conducted. The interviews, which function as an important aspect of the ontology, pre-date the new social inclusion agenda in Australian universities precipitated by the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008) and the Government’s Transforming Australian Higher Education (DEEWR, 2010). For this reason, reference to this new agenda is made in the Addendum to this thesis. An analysis of how this agenda recuperates, ruptures and/or further complicates the constitution of the learning advisor will be conducted as post-doctoral work.

1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis has six remaining chapters that frame the analysis, present the findings and discuss their implications.

Chapter Two: The will to truth in learning advising provides the necessary background to this thesis. It locates the thesis in its relationship to the ongoing dialogue within a field concerned with making sense of itself as a ‘profession’ (Samuelowicz, 1990), a ‘community of practice’ and a ‘discipline’. It achieves this by providing a brief history of the will to truth in the learning advising profession (Section 2.1) before troubling the will to truth as a project
of freedom (Section 2.2). It then demonstrates how the ‘collective voice’ presented through the professional association (Section 2.3) can be countered by a narrative that presents truth in the field as multiple, conflicting and paradoxical (Section 2.4). This chapter concludes by synthesising how this thesis will engage with the will to truth in the learning advising field (Section 2.5).

Chapter Three: Historical ontology: perspective, design, method describes how the conceptual and analytical tools of governmentality, genealogy and archaeology are brought together in a three dimensional analysis of the historical constitution of the learning advisor. Governmentality provides the perspective or lens to view the learning advisor as an institutional technology for the government of conduct, whose moral constitution can be interpreted as an effect of power in liberal society. Genealogy provides the design with its historical nominalism and fragmentation of the present. Historical nominalism decentres the learning advisor as the object of inquiry to focus on its conditions of emergence. The fragmentation of the present is achieved by tracing historical ruptures and transformations in what counts as learning advising (Lemke, 2007). Archaeology provides the method for tracing the emergence and circulation of those discursive formations which allow particular versions of the learning advisor to function as true. Genealogy and governmentality merge in their analytical dimensions with their focus on the mutual constitution of truth, identity and power (Dean, 1999). However, where genealogy is concerned primarily with the constitution of the subject as an effect of truth and power, governmentality is concerned with the political rationality and moral reasoning that underpins practices. These three dimensions provide layers of meaning to the analysis. They provide one means for making sense of the competing demands made on the learning advisor in the academy.

Chapter Four: Learning advising in a welfare society and Chapter Five: Learning advising in a learning society represents the outcome of the governmental-genealogical-archaeological analysis of the historical constitution of the learning advisor. Contained within these two chapters are four ACTs that trace the historical displacements in the constitution of the learning advisor that have been delimited in this thesis: ACT-I: a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty; ACT-II: an educational intervention for the social casualty; ACT-III: a curriculum intervention for the lifelong learner; ACT-IV: an administrative and pedagogical intervention for the Graduate. The organisation of these analysis chapters is presented in Figure 1.
Chapter Four Learning advising in a welfare society

ACT-I a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty

ACT-II an educational intervention for the social casualty

Chapter Five Learning advising in a learning society

ACT-III a curriculum intervention for the lifelong learner

ACT-IV an administrative and pedagogical intervention for the Graduate

Figure 1: Organisation of analysis chapters

Through the broad lens of governmentality, the shift from Chapter Four to Chapter Five diagnoses a displacement in the moral agency of the learning advisor from agent of redemption (therapeutic/educational) in a welfare society to agent of change (curriculum-focused/administrative) in a learning society. This shift, however, does not represent a full displacement. Rather than a sheer discontinuity, it represents a complexification. While it marks an overall transformation in political reasoning, the two constitutions combine in the present in a dynamic interaction which fragments and contradicts the coherence of the learning advising subject. Further, the shift from Chapter Four to Chapter Five should not be read as an opposition in terms of a binary but the historical flow of layers of reform that are the effect of history, politics, economy and society. Through the lens of governmentality, it also marks a shift in the rationality of government from the discipline of difference in the individual and social group, to the regulation of autonomy and responsibility in the population.

The use of two ACTs per Chapter is a strategic move to discern ruptures in the discursive formations that reconfigure the problem of conduct and its attendant intervention within each of the political rationalities. Each ACT traces the emergence and circulation of a particular discursive formation that create the particular conditions that render each ‘development’ in the identity of the learning advisor possible. The use of the term ‘ACT’ is intended to convey both the constructedness of phenomena examined in each of these sections, and also reflect the constructedness of the thesis as a partial and interpretive ontology that seeks more to incite dialogue than tell ‘the truth’ about learning advising per se. Foucault suggests that this kind of writing is productive and constituting in and of itself. I accept that it is no less dangerous or threatening than that which it seeks critique; despite this, I regard it as highly productive in testing the limits of the discourses that constrain our thinking.
Each ACT begins with a title that identifies the particular historical constitution of the subject of learning advising under investigation as a way of putting the conclusion last (for example, ‘a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty’). Each ACT has six sections that form the analytical framework for tracing the emergence and circulation of the discursive formation that rendered each constitution possible:

i. Convergence
ii. Problematisation
iii. Making sense
iv. Representation
v. Intervention
vi. Correspondence to the present

These are described below.

i. Convergence - conditions of emergence

Each ACT begins with an analysis of the way that historical circumstance, political and moral reasoning and various social and economic exigencies collide in a kind of accidental intersection to configure the university as a particular type of governmental apparatus (for example, ‘development panacea’, ‘social leveller’, ‘economic stabiliser’). I refer to these accidental intersections as ‘convergence’. In particular, this section highlights the way in which particular regimes of truth that configure the university as an apparatus of government and the subjectivity of the higher education student are consecrated within international bodies, such as the OECD, and are circulated among member countries. This section is underpinned by a policy-as-discourse perspective (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 1994) where, rather than surveying the field of competing ideas, it examines those which make the political agenda and limit what can and must be thought. The importance of this approach is that it recognises the constructedness of social and political problems and the role policy plays in representing a problem in a particular way at the same time it positions itself as the most sensible response.

ii. Problematisation – specifying the object of government

In this section, the accidental intersection identified in the convergence above is shown to produce a particular problematisation of higher education and/or the higher education student
as an object of thought and the dominant target of governmental intervention (for example, student failure, participation,employability) (Flynn, 1994). It is argued that problematisation is a necessary element of the mode of government in liberal society. As an analytic concept, ‘problematisation’ is concerned with unpacking how problems are socially and discursively constituted through particular forms of reasoning (Bessant, et al., 2003). It examines how a domain of being is called into question (objectification), and according to which truths and reasoning it becomes known, represented and reformed (subjectivation). In this sense, we view problematisation as a ‘loose amalgam of objectives’ (Bessant, Hill, & Watts, 2003, p18), around which ‘various programmes of reform are articulated’ (Green, et al., 2008, p259), such as the production of a skilled and/or scientific workforce.

iii. Making sense – the intellectual processing of reality

Problematisation and objectification require knowledge of the domain to be governed. This section examines the way the intellectual and productive technologies of government were used to make sense of the problem and propose interventions. As Rose (1999) suggests, in order to govern, ‘one needs some “intellectual technology” for trying to work out what one should do next’ (p27). Government thus entails the production of truth about the object of government. This section examines the various scientific discourses or regimes of truth drawn on to make sense of the domain of conduct or the population requiring government intervention. Lemke (2001) suggests this involves the rationalisation of the discursive field where power is to be exercised: the ‘intellectual processing of the reality’ (p191). This involves particular techniques of social investigation (Bessant, et al., 2003), such as concept delineation, object specification and justification for action (Lemke, 2001).

iv. Representation – social categories as objects of government

This section of each ACT identifies how the intellectual processing of reality produces a representation of the higher education student as an object of government, which in turn opens the discursive space for ‘appropriate’ student learning assistance to intervene. In this sense, it is argued that the capacity of the learning advisor to tell the truth about themselves in particular ways is linked directly to the representation of the higher education student. One of the most profound outcomes of the social investigations referred to above are the categories of identity that form the objects of government. This thesis is specifically concerned with the
production and representation of the student of higher education as an object of government, of which it is argued, the learning advisor can be seen as an effect.

This brings us to the aspect of representation and the role of policy and educational research. Problematisation and representation involve new ‘faculties of government, such as calculative institutions - statistical societies, administrative bureaux, university departments - where government analysis and decisions were the product of particular kinds of procedural expertise’ (Hunter, 1996, p153). As Hunter (1996) suggests

…the role of social statistics is not to represent reality but to problematise it: to call into question; to hold it up for inspection in the light of what it might be; to picture its reconstruction around certain norms of life and social well-being - norms derived from the social, economic and political objectives of government. Government thus unites the application of knowledge and the exercise of power not in the negative form of ideology, but in definite technical problematisations and interventions that help to bring new departments of social life into being. (p154)

Representation, then, is fundamentally normative. Indeed the very act of attempting to capture difference through representation ‘suppresses difference to producing order and recognition’ (Roy, 2001, p20). By making difference known, we delimit the unknown, we make the unknown unthinkable, and this is the real challenge of working with difference in the academy. We ultimately, and particularly in mass systems, are forced to work at the level of identity, of social categories. Foucault (1977b, p181) elaborates on this paradox in Theatrum Philosophicum, where he suggests that in handling difference, we generally assume ‘difference from or within something’ and ‘we pose through the concept, the unity of a group and its breakdown into species in the operation of difference’. Hence, difference becomes conceptual mastery over variation rather than any kind of acknowledgement of the unknowable multiplicity of things. The very operationalisation of difference transforms it into a recognisable category of specification in order for it to be governed.

Social categories therefore do not merely describe a given identity, they are ‘performative of identity’ (Fendler, 1999, p181). As discursive practices they ‘are characterised by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus, each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices’ (Foucault, 1997e, p199). As Cate Poynton (1997) argues, ‘social categories are not
truths: they arise from specific times, in specific places, to do specific work… social terms that have done important work tend to become part of the everyday language. with significant consequences for subsequent theoretical work using those terms (p17). She urges educational researchers and practitioners to understand the genealogy of the terms they use, to ‘take responsibility for knowing [their] history … and how they came to be as they are’ (p18) and to what purpose they are put to use. For Poynton, this also requires a commitment to questioning the relevance of such terms, recognising that ‘knowledge is not permanent or universal but always partial and contingent in both time and place’ (Poynton, 1997, p18).

v. Intervention – technologies for governing conduct (technologies of government)

This section of each ACT makes the link between the representation of higher education student subjectivity as an object of government and the intelligibility of the learning advisor as a technology of intervention. By intervention, I refer to those discursive and non-discursive practices that seek to govern the conduct of the individual and the population. In this sense, the learning advisor in the academy can be seen to engage in activities that are fundamentally normative civilising strategies that must shift with the notion of what counts as ‘civilised’. It is here that the truth games of the learning advisor in its possible configurations are shown to emerge as an effect of the knowledge/power relations that configure the university in particular ways and constitute the higher education student as an object of government. It is also shown how, within this discursive opening, the learning advisor is able to constitute him or herself as an ethical agent in the academy.

vi. Correspondence to the present

This section makes the analytical shift out of the historico-political context presented in each ACT to consider the way that aspects of the learning advising narrative in the present correspond with the various facets and truths present in the discursive formation delimited by each ACT. Drawing on the primary data from interviews with learning advisors, this section demonstrates how we tell the truth about ourselves in the present that contains the residue of each discursive formation.

If we recognise as Hall (2001), like Foucault suggests, that ‘meaning and meaningful practice is…constructed within discourse’ (p73), and that ‘nothing has any meaning outside of discourse’ (p73), then we can suggest that the cacophony of voices and opinions among the
learning advising community could be traced to specific discursive formations. This section across the four ACTs attempts to show how the various and discontinuous aspects of the learning advising narrative in the present can be found to have their intelligibility as first emerging from one or more of the four discursive formations presented in this thesis.

Chapter Six: Learning advising as a modernist project in ruins draws together political and social theory from Foucault, Readings, Brown and Connolly to consider how we might think otherwise about identity, ethics and freedom in the academy. It suggests that learning advisors are compelled to live on in ‘the ruins’ (Readings, 1996), arguing that the search for a unitary collective identity is not necessarily ‘good politics’. By recognising that the learning advising identity is only meaningful in terms of the constellation of reform that frames practice, it is argued that praxis becomes the site of innovation and the means for ethical practice. It is the site where rationality can be maintained without recourse to ‘negativity and opposition’ to structure moral systems. As Widder (2004) suggests

Ethics becomes a negotiation of points of moral ambiguity, where the oppositions that structure moral systems display their inadequacy and available alternatives cannot be easily separated into good and bad or right and wrong. But it also becomes a process of creative self-overcoming. (pp426-7)

Chapter Six thus argues for the field of learning advising to engage, not in a politics of difference, but in a politics of freedom; that is, as Widder (2004) suggests, to explore more meaningful ways to engage, not in the construction of a collective identity, but in ‘a micro-political domain of ethical negotiation’ (p425).
CHAPTER TWO: THE WILL TO TRUTH IN LEARNING ADVISING

This chapter locates the thesis in its relationship to the ongoing dialogue within learning advising concerned with making sense of itself as a ‘profession’ (Samuelowicz, 1990), a ‘community of practice’ (Milnes, 2005; Webb, 2001) and a ‘discipline’ (Barthel, 2007; Garner, Chanock, & Clerehan, 1995). It begins by providing an historical analysis of the will to truth in learning advising taken from some of the key publications that have emerged from the field since 1978 (Section 2.1). It then outlines why the will to truth is both enabling and dangerous (Section 2.2), and uses excerpts of interviews with contemporary learning advisors to illustrate how the ‘problem’ of the learning advising complex complicates professionalisation and the production of a coherent collective identity (Sections 2.3 and 2.4). The final section synthesises the key points that frame the research question and purpose of the thesis (Section 2.5).

2.1 An historical perspective on the will to truth in learning advising

In response to the diversity and vulnerability of its practitioners, over the past 20 years, the learning advising field has problematised the ambiguity of its identity, increasingly casting itself as an important object of knowledge in order to articulate with some clarity its expertise and contribution. Engaged in the necessary will to truth, or ‘system of exclusion’ (Foucault, 1972), some of the keenest statements have emphasised the epistemological underpinnings of the work (eg. socio-linguistics rather than behavioural psychology), the professional status of the work (eg. academic and professional versus general and technical), the ontological status of the work (eg. developmental rather than remedial) and the locus of the work (eg. individuals, social groups, academic discourse, the curriculum and teaching staff).

The difficulty in defining with any precision the contribution learning advisors make to the university has been attributed to a range of factors: for example, the diverse cultures and policies of each institution (Percy & Skillen, 2000), the difficulty in setting boundaries around what constitutes learning advising core knowledge (Percy & Stirling, 2003; Webb, 2001), the disparity between units across institutions with regard to their professional identity (Melles,
a lack of a common and meaningful set of evaluation procedures (Zeegers, 2003), and the lack of organisation as a profession (Webb, 2001; Zeegers, 2003). The overwhelming diversity of its practitioners, their qualifications, experience, knowledge, outlook and practices, means that any definition will always be exclusive rather than inclusive. Despite this, with the establishment of the professional Association of Academic Language and Learning (AALL), the will to articulate with some clarity the expertise and contribution of the learning advisor has intensified.

One of the hallmarks of professionalisation is the production of a narrative that enters into a game of truth bent on differentiating itself, firming up boundaries of knowledge and expertise, articulating the particular division of labour it serves, and perhaps later, regulating standards of practice (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, & Sylvan, 1993). Thus, professionalisation tends to involve truth-telling of the teleological kind where the evolution and contribution of the profession is explained in developmental terms (Messer-Davidow, et al., 1993). However, as a rather disparate field of practitioners bound together through similar institutional deployment, practical experience and a general commitment to ‘make a difference’ to student learning, the challenge to articulate an inclusive and comprehensive definition of the knowledge and expertise of this field in the present is an ongoing challenge. Truth-telling in the field of learning advising is decidedly multiple and contradictory.

From what could possibly be referred to as a ‘meta-epistemological approach’ (Hacking, 2002, p9) to explaining apparent shifts in approaches to writing instruction in universities, Lea and Street (1998) in the UK identify three historical ‘developments’: study skills - academic socialisation - academic literacy. These developments, they suggest, are the product of epistemic shifts in understanding literacy and the role of language in learning: from behaviourist to cultural anthropological to socio-linguistic respectively. Their paper is quite frequently cited in learning advising papers as a meaningful way of describing theoretical advances in our work. The limitation with this paper, however, is that it is mapping approaches to the teaching of writing in the UK rather than providing an historical perspective on learning advising as a profession in Australia, and therefore may be misinterpreted as suggesting that learning advisors were always already employed exclusively in universities to teach writing. This is not the case in the UK or Australia.
Having said this, the notion of language as a social practice, and academic literacy as a philosophical and pedagogical approach to student learning, tends to dominate the AALL epistemology in the present. As such, making sense of learning advising in Australia in the present certainly involves linguistic overtones: for example, in the AALL submission to the AUQA Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency, it was suggested that ALL professionals draw on a number of theoretical perspectives, including systemic functional grammar, genre theory and critical discourse analysis to inform their practice. Systemic functional grammar and genre theory provide a means of analysing student texts to clarify discipline-specific requirements. Critical discourse analysis helps lecturers understand the relative value of various knowledges within specific disciplines and to locate these within broader academic, professional and social contexts. Such theoretical knowledge enables ALL staff to design subjects and tasks to help students understand and fulfil (as well as critique) the requirements of their discipline. (AUQA, 2008, p9)

From this statement, one could assume that linguistics is the basis of learning advisors’ knowledge and expertise. This thesis will show that this is not necessarily so, and was certainly not always the case.

Telling the story from another perspective, it could be suggested that the vision, resilience and persistence of the learning advising pioneers of the late 1970s carved a niche in the academy, fought for professional recognition, and differentiated ‘educational’ credentials from the counselling approaches from whence it emerged (see for example Craswell & Bartlett, 2001; Stevenson & Kokkin, 2007). For example, Gordon Taylor, who in 1974 was appointed as a ‘remedial English teacher’ in the Faculty of Engineering at Monash University, could be said to have worked tirelessly to have his role recognised as academic and developmental, achieving a shift in the symbolic location of his work from a tiny office in ‘the backblocks of Engineering’ into the Centre for Teaching and Learning (Taylor, 2008). Similarly, at the Australian National University in 1978, Brigid Ballard and John Clanchy were successful in having their learning advising work differentiated from psychological counselling and recognised as educational and professional though not academic (Craswell & Bartlett, 2001).

These kinds of ‘developments’ in the field of learning advising, however, have not been seamless. During the early 1980s, the battle lines between student counsellors, study skills teachers, ESL teachers and linguists, and later the emerging phenomenography or ‘learning to
learn’ movement, were evident. The separation of these ‘domains’ for making sense of student learning problems and solutions are also thoroughly difficult to trace as their relative development was far more rhizomatic than differentiated. During the 1970s and 80s, these emerging fields of knowledge and practice in the academy merged and broke apart, appropriated aspects of each other and separated off in ad hoc ways. In the early 1980s, learning advising practitioners communicated loosely through a range of conferences with communication, learning skills and study skills in the title. It was in the push and pull of these times that eventually learning advisors became increasingly separate from counselling as well as teaching and curriculum development, and language/literacy theory became the privileged lens through which they were to view the ‘problem’ of student learning.

One of the earliest traces of the scholarship of linguistics in the field and its overlap with the work of educational developers can be found in Gordon Taylor’s article entitled ‘Coming to terms with English Expression in the University’ (Taylor, 1978). What is interesting about this article is the way it locates the learning advisor as engaged, not in the remedial tuition of students, but in the professional development of teaching staff. Taylor troubled the received view of student ‘language problems’ as an issue of individual deficit contending instead that language is central role in student learning because ‘induction into a discipline’s mode of thinking and analysis can only be performed in language’ (p34). He emphasised the role of the learning advisor as a language specialist whose expertise could be used to ‘assist tutors in ‘interpreting’ the idiosyncratic language of many texts and monographs to students’ (p35). His article ends with a job description which includes involvement in staff workshops and tertiary teaching courses in addition to working with students.

Through his scholarship and activities, Taylor had entered into a game of truth in the academy about the expertise and contribution of the learning advisor that is still strong today: specifically, he insisted that language and content could not be dealt with separately, and that language specialists had a key role to play in staff development. His arguments, however, fell largely on deaf ears. In response to the publication of one of his research projects that

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10 1982 Communication at University: Purpose, Process, Product, La Trobe University; 1983 Communication, Learning and Literacy at Tertiary Level, Annual National Conference on Learning Skills and Communication, University of Queensland; 1984 Language and Learning at Tertiary Level, 5th Australian Study Skills Conference, Deakin University; 1985 Learning to learn: language and study skills in context, 5th Australian Study Skills Conference, University of Adelaide. (Taken from list of Conferences on AALL website, 9/11/2009).
demonstrated that the university was, in fact, not witnessing a fall in standards of literacy, but was operating according to an inadequate understanding of language (Taylor & Nightingale, 1990), he found himself accused of ‘professionalising literacy and democratising standards’ (Chipman, 1988, p38). Despite this, Taylor would eventually have his work recognised as academic and establish the Language and Learning Centre in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University. This Centre would build a reputation of excellent work throughout the 1990s before being dismantled in 2007 and reconfigured as a Learning Skills Centre personned by general staff and located in the Library. This particular example is a neat demonstration of the circle of life in learning advising.

Returning to the battle lines of the 1980s, however, the process of differentiating services, perspectives and professions began to occur in a serious way with: the convergence of greater numbers of ‘disadvantaged students’ gaining entry to higher education; and a proliferation in the fields of expertise charged with addressing the ‘problem’ of difference. Up to this point, Taylor and his peers, Brigid Ballard, John Clanchy, Hanne Bock and Peggy Nightingale had played a key role in differentiating their work from the counselling and psychological approaches to diagnosing student learning problems as a problem of isolated cognitive and behavioural skills. In 1988, these practitioners published *Literacy by Degrees* (Taylor, et al., 1988) as a kind of manifesto for the growing number of ethnographers and socio-linguists in the field. This volume of essays sought to privilege cultural and socio-linguistic interpretations of student learning issues over the dominant behaviourist (study skills) approach. For Taylor and his peers, student learning was best facilitated through the process of cultural mediation into the discourses of the disciplines.

It was in this period, however, that another serious contender in the area of learning assistance emerged – the learning to learn/ phenomenographic movement. This created a three-way tension between the counsellors, the linguists and the emerging interactionist (phenomenographic) advocates. These tensions were evident in the 1985 Learning to Learn Conference at the University of Adelaide. Addressing the notion that context was vital in the provision of appropriate learning assistance, Paul Ramsden, arguing his point from the phenomenographic perspective, outlined his evidence and explanation why generalised study skills programs were ineffective in helping students to become better learners despite their
enormous popularity. His argument centred on the context of learning and the need to attend to students’ conceptions of the task by improving learning design and assessment activities.\(^\text{11}\)

With a similar emphasis on ‘context’, but from a linguistic perspective, Peggy Nightingale\(^\text{12}\) and Joeli Hancock\(^\text{13}\) suggested that the teaching of writing required an authentic purpose and audience with ‘no guarantee that writing skills developed in one context will transfer to another’ (Hancock & Bowden, 1983, p55). Countering the importance of context, Vic Beasley\(^\text{14}\), a counsellor from Flinders University, strongly defended his Foundations Course teaching essay writing skills ‘outside the disciplines’, accusing the suggestion that writing was a disciplinary matter as ‘academic chauvinism’.

In many ways, the rise of the phenomenographic movement secured the unnatural separation of language and learning advising from educational development practices. With its focus on student learning approaches, ‘learning skills’ and curriculum design, the ‘learning to learn’ movement produced a different lens through which to consider and act upon student ‘learning problems’. The distinction between this lens and the way learning advisors recognised and acted upon issues with student learning was made clear by Hanne Bock (1986), the only learning advisor published in the proceedings of the Marysville Symposium. Taking an ethnographic approach, Bock vehemently but diplomatically differentiated her work with individual students from the emerging phenomenographic movement with her outspoken critique of its principles.\(^\text{15}\) Bock’s argument was that despite its emphasis on ‘context’, phenomenography was largely blind to cultural difference as it pertained to students and the disciplines in which they studied. With her emphasis on assisting individuals, Bock framed the language and learning advisor as a practitioner who could work with students whose ‘backgrounds’ interfered with their transition into the culture of the academy.


\(^{13}\) Hancock, J. (1985) Helping students write: what help can be given and who can give it? (pp53-60). Proceedings of the 1985 Learning to learn: language and study skills in context, 5\(^{\text{th}}\) Australian Study Skills Conference, University of Adelaide.


Over a decade later, attempting to make sense of the field through a survey of practitioners, Samuelowicz’s (1990) paper, *Profession, emerging profession...or bag of tricks?*, identified a highly gendered (female) and vulnerable set of learning advising practitioners dispersed in an *ad hoc* way and drawn from counselling or secondary and tertiary teaching contexts, approximately 30% with English as a Second Language (ESL) qualifications. What was emerging was a field of practitioners, diverse and vulnerable, two themes that would prevail in its own identification. A study of models of learning support five years later by McLean, Surtie, Elphinstone and Devlin (1995) identified units mainly located in student services or faculties that dealt with ‘a variety of issues including communication skills, ESL support, cultural differences, academic or 'study' skills and assistance with mathematics and computing’ (p78). It recommended an optimal model of support as contextualised in the disciplines, student-centred, scholarly, and integrated with other services.

The importance of context, long espoused by the linguists and ethnographers in the field, and further, although oddly, legitimated by the phenomenographers, meant that the focus of learning advising practice was shifting discursively from the generic to the discipline-specific. The 1994 National Language and Academic Skills Conference (Chanock, 1994b) had as its theme, ‘Integrating the Teaching of Academic Discourses into Courses in the Disciplines’. This conference was not only an opportunity for showcasing what had become a more ‘acceptable’ learning advising practice (ie. working with faculty to integrate ‘academic discourse’), but also a forum for articulating the ‘truths’ around this new understanding of practice: that learning support is more ‘initiation’ than ‘remediation’ (Chanock, 1994b; Craswell, 1994); that learning is context dependent (Baskin, 1994); that language and writing are a ‘social practice’ (Cartwright, 1994); that academic literacy is not reducible to ‘skills’ (Taylor, 1994); that learning advisers are necessarily familiar with ‘a range of academic discourses’ (Ballard, 1994; Chanock, 1994a); and that their key purpose is ‘interpreting the demands of the academic culture and its especial epistemology’ for students (Ballard, 1994).

It also provided a forum for resistance to both the notion of academic discourse and the privileging of integration (Ballard, 1994; Craswell, 1994; Phillips, 1994). From within the field, Ballard suggested that the focal point for learning advisors should always remain ‘the student as a learner across a range of disciplines’ (Ballard, 1994). While Phillips (1994), a
concerned philosopher but not a learning advisor, questioned whether there could be such an activity as ‘teaching academic discourse’.

Indicative of the way that learning advising is so utterly vulnerable to the policy shifts and funding arrangements of the university, and the way it responds as a professional community, is the back-peddling that occurred in the following Conference with its shift in focus from working with faculty to working directly with students again. As the ‘integration’ agenda was seen to have been appropriated by the economic rationalists and used to cut back on services, the 1996 Conference became a forum for elucidating the importance of individual consultations by demonstrating how they contributed to learning advisors’ understanding of the student experience and, therefore, their ability to work with larger numbers (Chanock, Burley, & Davies, 1996). The papers in this Proceedings tend to highlight the ‘dialogic’ (Clerehan, 1996) and ‘ethical’ (Boddington, 1996) nature of the individual consultation, emphasise its importance to the unique nature of learning advising knowledge, that is, the perspective of the student; provide suggestions for how it can be made more efficient (Bourne, Hicks, & O'Regan, 1996); and show how the practice is valuable to particular groups of students (Best & Neil, 1996).

Commenting on the vulnerability of language and learning units to the misrecognition of the complexities of their work, and setting up an opposition between the two practices of individual consultation and curriculum-integration, Webb and Bonnano (1994) argued

[that] if the unit adopts a role which is oriented towards counselling individual students with the focus on their psycho-social welfare as learners, then it may be more likely that a reviewer would judge their effectiveness as one might judge a counselling service. If the unit adopts an approach that focuses on the integration of communication skills within the subject curriculum, then the reviewer may make judgements about the unit’s effectiveness as one might judge a faculty or department. (p126)

From this perspective, the unit had to decide on which practices it valued most in order to position itself more strategically in the teaching and learning process.

With disciplinary ambition, in 1995, Academic Skills Advising: Towards a Discipline (Garner, et al., 1995) sought to ‘indicate some of the distinctive features and significant recent developments’ of the profession, in an attempt to articulate expertise and contribution in the
face of perceived economic and political vulnerability. What it did achieve was a clear
demonstration of the diversity of knowledge that counted as ‘learning advising’ - cognitive
psychology, counselling theory, socio-linguistics, social constructivism and various theories
around writing pedagogy and communication.

Interestingly, with so much attention given to the language dimension of our work, the 1999
National Language and Academic Skills (NLAS) Conference, ‘Language and LEARNING: the
learning side of our work’ (Crosling, Moore, & Vance, 2000) sought to recuperate the
learning dimension in response to the discursive shift to the ‘learning paradigm’ in higher
education - lifelong learning, higher order skills development and student-centred learning.

Speaking through the policy narrative of choice - lifelong learning - in the mid 1990s, ‘The
position of academic language and learning skills advisers/lecturers in Australian Universities
1995 – 1999’ published in 1999 (Carmichael, et al., 1999) paid homage to the important role
that learning advisors play in quality assuring students’ development of lifelong learning
strategies. This position statement outlined what was seen as the academic role of learning
advisors, values and principles, core objectives, qualities, and qualifications, experience and
research. This description included values, such as: the recognition of equality of opportunity
for all students with regard to access and achievement in tertiary study; becoming lifelong
learners; and cultural diversity, ‘in which all students are encouraged to contribute equally to
and benefit from the skills and knowledge available at tertiary study’ (p2). Some of the
principles included: support and encouragement of lifelong learning strategies; academic
language and learning skills; acknowledgement of the diversity of professional expertise;
recognition of the dual role of working with students and staff; openness to multiple modes of
teaching; recognition of the relevance of this line of work to the quality of teaching and
learning in the academy (p2). While this is a product of its time, it retains currency within the
field and continues to provide a useful snapshot of how the field of learning advising
described itself over a decade ago.

The vexing issue of identity again came to the fore at the 2001 NLAS Conference, rather
appropriately entitled ‘Changing Identities’. A number of perspectives were offered: for
example, the ways in which teaching and writing pedagogies position the learner (Chanock,
2001; James & McInnes, 2001); meeting the needs of a ‘changing student population’ (Drury,
2001); the influence of the generic skills and graduate attributes agenda (Jones, 2001; Jones,
Bonnano, & Scouller, 2001; O'Regan, 2001); historical perspectives on the learning advisor’s evolution (Webb 2001; Craswell & Bartlett 2001); and the difficulties negotiating a shared professional identity (Melles, 2001).

The plenary paper at this conference, ‘Learning and Academic Skills Advising: A professional ontogenesis’ (Webb, 2001) argued for a clearer articulation of ‘the distinctive contribution that LAS professionals can and do make’ to higher education and provided a very useful snapshot of the kinds of subject positions learning advisors had taken up according to the various ‘prevailing themes’ framing social and institutional policy. Webb’s table is replicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Professional ontogenesis – one possible sketch (Webb, 2001, p15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevailing theme</th>
<th>Response by LAS professions</th>
<th>LAS professionals:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>• supporting the minority in an elitist system</td>
<td>The Remediators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massification</td>
<td>• ameliorating disadvantage for “non-traditional students”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalisation</td>
<td>• internationalisation and inclusiveness in curriculum</td>
<td>The Mediators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic skills</td>
<td>• integration of skills with content</td>
<td>The Integrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>• outcomes oriented monitoring and assessing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>• learning as reading and writing</td>
<td>The Transformers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinarity</td>
<td>• language as transdisciplinary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Webb’s incitement for a more active professional reinvention locates agency squarely with the LAS practitioner. The narrative incites learning advisors to reinvent themselves according to the agenda of the day – as agents of organisational change. Her suggestion at this point was to identify where learning advising knowledge intersects with that of discipline staff and other educational developers in order to ‘elaborate (for them and others) how role convergences can benefit the co-production of new understandings’ (p15). But while her proposed professional ontogenesis is well-considered, it appears to suggest an evolutionary story of progress representing the learning advisor as gradually moving from the margins to the centre, from remedial to developmental, from peripheral to central to the undertakings of the academy. Webb (2001) presents this table by saying:
But the aspect I find most tantalising is imagining the futures. What might the LAS professional evolve into? What might be the conditions now and in the future which could alter the trajectory? What might be the responses which will strengthen and sustain LAS professionals into the future? (p15)

Such an ontogenesis is useful and productive work for thinking through how we have been deployed and have made sense of the task at hand across our short history, but I am concerned that it might be read as a narrative of progress rather than a series of subordinations that repeat themselves in the present. Continuing on the identity and professionalisation theme, at the 2003 NLAS Conference - ‘In the future…’, Peter Zeegers in his plenary entitled ‘Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?’ asked, ‘how do recent national policy changes in higher education manifest themselves at a local level and in particular, on the role of those who provide student academic support?’ (Zeegers, 2003, p25) This paper followed close on the heels of Webb’s incitement to clearly articulate for ourselves and others ‘the distinctive contribution that [learning advising] professionals can and do make’ to higher education (Webb, 2001) encouraging the formation of a professional organisation with its own journal as an important step away from the persistent remedial identity of the practitioner.

What has been demonstrated here is that learning advising in the present can be seen as a tangled accumulation of theoretical perspectives and orientations, institutional exigencies and personal idiosyncrasies framed by a deep commitment to make sense of itself. It is possible then to see why formalising as the professional Association of Academic Language and Learning (AALL) in 2007 was a high point for a field of practitioners who only began to appear in universities as late as the 1970s, and whose professional anxiety and ‘struggle for…existence’ (Foucault, 1977a, p149) has always been something of an occupational hazard.

2.2 Troubling the will to truth

Within the learning advising community, as elsewhere, professionalisation is regarded as an important strategic and political move to create a louder and unified political voice through which greater recognition and security in the academy might be obtained (Zeegers, 2003). Concomitant with the will to professionalise, however, is an intensification of the will to truth
and the deliberate construction of a surface of collective identity. It is possible to interpret the intention behind professionalisation and correspondingly, the learning advising will to truth, as a project of freedom, where freedom might be understood not as a liberation from dominance, but as Foucault suggests, a continued practice that involves ‘the art of not being governed quite so much’ (Foucault, 1997a, p28).

The ‘will to truth’ involves the production of identity as a discursive practice of self-formation (Sawicki, 1994). In order to stay relevant, or discern the locus and target of ethical action, identity is a necessary evil, a political imperative and a fundamental paradox (Connolly, 1991). Learning advising is, therefore, compelled to tell the truth about itself; as Foucault (1980b) suggests

…there can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (p93)

Freedom, in this sense, is not conceived as ‘an achievement or institutional guarantee’ (Brown, 2006, p28). Rather, it is a space where we never arrive, but continue to engage in games of truth as a practice of freedom, ‘attached’ to our various, contingent and partial political aims; armed with provisional definitions; transgressing those fixed forms that seek to dominate our existence; and aware that all of this might be thought differently tomorrow.

Taking a Foucauldian perspective, it is not the production of identity which is challenged: this is regarded as inevitable. What is challenged is the ‘epistemological move to ground our politics in a foundational subject’ (Sawicki, 1994, p301). The challenge for the learning advising profession, as it is for all institutionalised entities, is as Dumm (1996, p142) suggests, the challenge of how to ‘engage in a contemporary political ethos that does not fall into the trap engendered by the desire to secure identity’. I argue that the challenge for the learning advising profession is to cultivate the ability ‘to negotiate identity without falling into the trap of strong identification’ (Dumm, 1996, p142).

This is because the trouble with truth-telling about identity is that one is not easily able to make sense of a field that makes sense in multiple ways without engaging in systems of exclusion that talk in terms of norms and gloss plurality, perspective and difference (Villa,
1996), thereby erasing complexity. This is because telling the truth about identity requires at some level the articulation of difference (Connolly, 1991): it is, therefore, both enabling and dangerous.

The problem of the will to truth, and its logical conclusion of strong identification, is that it spills too easily into the petrification of identity, where ‘…established identities [congeal] into fixed forms, [and are subsequently] thought and lived as if their structure expressed the true order of things’ (Connolly, 1991, p64). Further, because identity is ‘relational and collective… [it] is always connected to a series of differences that help it be what it is’ (p64). For any individual, the tendency then ‘is to describe the differences on which you depend in a way that gives privilege or priority to you’ (p64), and for this reason, Connolly argues that the pursuit of identity feeds polemicism. Polemicism, and in particular, notions of who is inside and who is outside learning advising, are important aspects of the learning advising complex. This idea will be discussed further in the following two sections on the collective voice and the development of a counter narrative.

2.3 A collective voice?

Continuing with the will to truth, post-professionalisation, at the 2007 AALL Conference, ‘How do we communicate?’, the President of AALL provided the following summary of a survey of AALL practitioners which encapsulates the ‘collective truths’ we tell about ourselves in the present:

Our most important message to students is that “we exist”, that “we are not remedial, that we do make a difference” and that “it is important to develop good literacy skills which go beyond university”. We need to keep telling students that improving their academic writing skills is “not going to happen in five minutes”, that they “must give themselves time, persist, commit and be proactive”. We keep reminding them to “use us, and that we are here to help them”. Ultimately, students need to know that “mastering many different discourses is extremely empowering”.

Our most important message to academics is that ALL is “central to tertiary learning, and that it is our joint responsibility”, and also that “ALL is integral to disciplinary content, and cannot be taught in isolation”. …We also tell academics that “we are ALL experts, not proof-reading, remedial, fix-it, grammar teachers” and remind them that “genres are specialised: writing a report in science is quite different from writing a
critical analytical review in social science courses. *These genres can be learnt*, but not in a two week workshop”.

The strongest message we try to convey to senior university managers is that “*ALL is integral to transition, early intervention, retention, and the whole student learning experience* … and the integral nature of our work at an institutional level needs to be recognised”. We tell managers to “listen to us, and to heed our advice” and that ‘*ALL is a discipline*: we’re not just grammar teachers. In fact, we’re not grammar teachers”. We also tell them about “*the increasing nexus between teaching and learning and research*” and that ALL is “*developmental, complex, multi-faceted and requires appropriate resources: every student needs ALL development, not just international students*”. “*It is the moral and ethical duty of care of an institution to look after its students*” and “*good ALL practices add value to the university and increase its reputation*”. (Barthel, 2007, no page) (emphasis added)

This ‘collective voice’ makes the following truth claims: we are not remedial grammar teachers; we are experts with specialised knowledge and joint responsibility for empowering students by teaching them the academic discourse/genres of their disciplines. AALL is a discipline adding value to the university and assisting it in fulfilling its moral and ethical duties. We are ethical agents in the academy, ‘adding value’ to the student, the curriculum, the discipline academic and the university. However, as demonstrated in the discussion thread introduced in Section 1.3, despite professionalisation and attempts to construct a collective voice, learning advising continues to constitute a field of practice characterised by multiplicity and paradox.

In contrast to Barthel’s (2007) seemingly agreeable collective narrative about ‘how we communicate’, I have assembled a counter-narrative from the data obtained from interviews with seventeen learning advisors across six Australian universities. This counter-narrative has been constructed to speak to the differences in perspective, orientation and practice across the field in order to trouble the will to truth and the normalising tendencies of professionalisation. The counter-narrative demonstrates: how difference within the field creates impossibilities for identifying what constitute core knowledge and therefore appropriate credentialing; and how the complexity and ambiguity of the work that we do confounds attempts to clearly articulate the job. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive summary of AALL knowledge, values and ideas. It is used to illustrate the competing truths that are evident in the field. Through this analysis, it is possible to see how drawing boundaries around learning advising work is not possible without making some of these practitioners ‘wrong’.
2.4 A counter-narrative

One of the central concerns for the profession has been the articulation of a core body of knowledge. On the one hand, ‘a lot of [the literature in this field] came out of education or educational psychology, or linguistics’ (13), and yet quite a number of practitioners do not have a background in these areas. Thus, while it is arguable that one may not be able to ‘do this job without applied linguistics’ (7), or at least without ‘a theory of language, to be able to articulate what the role of language in learning is’ (12), there are practitioners in the field who ‘don’t believe you need psychology or linguistics to do the work we do’ (14). In fact, it might even be argued that the ‘ESL and teaching background rather than an academic background’ (16) makes the profession ‘weak’, ‘feminised and seen as a helping profession’ and ‘associated with remedial work’ (16).

For those who enter from disciplines not of the language and education ilk, the dominance of language and educational perspectives is likely to be experienced as ‘alienating’ (13) and lead them to question ‘how [they] could actually make a contribution to the profession itself’ (13). For these practitioners, the ‘conceptual breakthrough’, that ‘refreshing’ moment of arrival, comes when they discover that they can ‘sneak in’ their theoretical backgrounds, whether it be ‘literature’ (10,15,17), ‘sociology’ (16), ‘history’ (13), ‘anthropology’ (3), ‘post-colonial’ (3,13), ‘post-structural’ or ‘feminist’ (11,13) theory to make sense of the work they are doing.

It has been proposed that the problem of knowledge/expertise in the field may be better dealt with through appropriate credentialing. Indeed there are very clear arguments for AALL ‘to take over some sort of professional responsibility for the training’ (7) of ALL practitioners, particularly those who ‘come from a different background to me’ (7), or who show ‘no commitment to the profession’ (7). Correspondingly, there needs to be ‘better access’ (7) to the literature in the field, a proper ‘induction’ (7,10) for people entering the field. At the moment, ‘there is this general blanket cover that because [we] are all part of the ALL community we're all equally good. I’m not convinced of that at all’ (15). From this perspective, training and accreditation would allow us ‘to set some standards’ (15) and improve ‘accountability’ (14) in practices and general professional behaviour. But if

16 The number allocated to each phrase denotes the unique number allocated to each interview participant.
professionalisation is a practice of freedom, why does it seek to regulate the behaviour of its members? Is not the practice of freedom also the practice of difference and transgression (Barry, et al., 1996)? If we return to Foucault’s notion of freedom as ‘the art of not being governed quite so much’ (Foucault, 1997a, p28), it is possible to begin to see a tension evident in professionalisation and will to truth within the field.

Complicating the notion of appropriate credentialing, the weight given to the kind of knowledge and expertise we have depends on the kind of work we do. For those running ‘a peer-assistance scheme’ (11), teaching ‘generic skills’, ‘learning skills’ (15), ‘academic skills’ (4), ‘teaching students how to think’ (16) and/or regarding themselves as ‘not language advisors at all but learning skills specialists’ (15), a language qualification may not be a pre-requisite. On the other hand, for those whose job is developing ‘strategies and resources that help make explicit what kind of language is integral and enabling to a particular teaching and learning environment’ (12), then language would have to be regarded as central. It might also be said that there is in fact no ‘special breed called learning advisors’ (15), and that ‘a good academic who has some empathy with students and is a good teacher can do it’ (15).

Indeed, the one constant for all practitioners interviewed for this research project is the experience of teaching. This leads to another fault in the notion of credentialing: the fact that what makes a good learning advisor is not necessarily the sum of their formal education but the sum of their scholarship, life and teaching experience. As one of the interviewees notes, ‘the things that I see as helping me to do this job come from the other paths that I have taken’ (3). Practitioners enter the ALL field, frequently ‘by accident’ (5,11,13), from a variety of pathways and disciplines, all of which involve teaching at a range of levels in a range of contexts. What informs our practice is not merely our education, but the curiosity and passion we gain from the experience of being ‘first in family’ (18) as a university student, the ‘memory of failing an essay because of poorly articulated requirements’ (14), the experience of working with ‘socio-economically deprived kids with all sorts of problems’ (2), ‘teaching as a volunteer overseas for two years, not having language and being in a cultural minority’ (14), ‘the experience of culture shock, and having enjoyed another culture’ (3), the experience of ‘being part of an international community’ (4), ‘developing resources as a home tutor’(3), ‘trying to structure student learning’ (16) as a university tutor, or teaching high school students in ‘rural …Australia’ (13). This is not to say that language and educational theory do not help, but we ought to be careful of ‘exclud[ing people] because of the kinds of
backgrounds that they come from’ (3). Experience counts, different theoretical perspectives count, and to a large extent, ‘most of us hone our skills [and knowledge] as we go’ (10). Besides, ‘we use what works and what feels like it is working’ (8).

At an ontological level, then, we may say that the very thing that defines us is that we are ‘real teachers’ (2) who have ‘more time’ (8) and are able to take a ‘more empathetic’ (8) and ‘softer line’ (15) with students than their subject lecturers. Because ‘we get to see the students’ perspective, and staff’ (8), we are able to play an important ‘advocacy’ role for students (2,11). We might even liken the role to ‘lifeline counselling’ (15) or ‘coaching’ (8) because learning advising is about recognising that for most students, it is ‘all mixed up together, their study issues and their personal issues’ (2) and we ‘do a huge job in raising students’ self-esteem, in possibly preventing withdrawals, even suicide’ (2). However, rather than counselling, perhaps ‘consultant… would make more sense’ (12). It is just that ‘if it has got that ring of providing support and counselling, I don’t relate to that at all’ (12). In fact, ‘we are actually not counsellors, it is not that kind of encounter, it’s teaching’ (7).

Teaching or counselling aside, for those of us who consider ourselves as having a student advocacy role, we are likely to suggest that ‘a good learning advisor is not a gate-keeper. We can’t be gate-keepers’ (14). But gate-keepers we are when we offer a ‘credit bearing academic literacy course in each of the faculties’ (9), which we might also suggest is where we find ourselves ‘most effective’ (9), or at least find the teaching experience ‘a lot more satisfactory’ (9) than those ‘less satisfactory short workshops [embedded] in specific subjects’ (9), which tend to be ‘too bitty’ (9).

This brings us to the value and location of our practices. It is difficult not to recognise our work as fundamentally remedial, ‘sort of a like a doctor’ (10) because ‘we get students who are failing, not really capable in their own understanding’ (10). Indeed, there are many students who ‘need to play catch up’ (7). I mean, ‘the IELTS test itself almost implies a remediation role for students who come in at 6.5. They need to be helped. They need to be brought up to the standard. And I mean, let’s be honest, that is the case they need to be brought up’ (16). Besides, ‘it continues to justify our job’ (6), and ‘there is always going to be a need for that kind of remediation. That is also what we do’ (6), and ‘they need us… although I still think that we are always in danger of being reduced, or always fairly
marginalised anyway, I feel, I can’t speak for everybody, but in most universities we are fairly marginalised’ (2).

The individual consultation is the object of a love/hate relationship within the field. In one unit, ‘you’ve got to be really brave to say the words [individual consultation]’ (11) because ‘there [are] a substantial number of people… who [don’t] want to do individual appointments anymore, who [see] that as remedial … rather than developmental’ (11). In other units, the individual consultation is the lifeblood of the learning advisor: it is the ‘work with individual students’ where learning advisors recognise that they ‘can have a huge transforming influence…[and] make a big difference to individual student’s lives’ (1,2,3,8,13,14,16,17).

For these practitioners, working with the individual is the only site where we can actually use ‘all the expertise we have’ (3). But, then again, it is also considered ‘a bit old-fashioned’ (15) and ‘time intensive, labour intensive’ (15), not to mention ‘emotionally and mentally draining’ (5). Units need to ‘achieve a balance’ (15) between consultations and other practices if only to protect their staff from ‘burn out’ (5).

Within the field there is a growing belief that we need to ‘put ourselves at the … centre of the teaching and learning process for students’ (8) because ‘the way we are constructed often is on the margins’ (8). We would argue that ‘we are here to really help … any student, not just students at risk or not students just on passes, but any students...’ (13) which is partly why we would like ‘to be much more closely aligned with the disciplines and be invited to participate in discussions about curriculum changes, about how to present materials - to be an integral part’ (8). For three decades, we have developed a strong focus on ‘working with our colleagues in the disciplines’ (1), finding ways to talk about ‘the cultural … and sub-cultural discipline reasons for writing the way they want to write’ (3). And yet, despite our attempts at ‘embedding’ (2,7,8,9,11) ‘academic literacy into the disciplines’ (11), it may simply be ‘delusions of grandeur to think that we are going to have a huge influence’ (3).

On the one hand, it is suggested that through our embedded practices, ‘relationships can form and spread throughout the school. But I don’t think that happens all that much. [We] just ended up working with people in silos in the school, or with people who are committed anyway’ (11). And this is largely because ‘relationships with the school staff, teaching staff in the schools depends very much on individuals, and [we] often build up a very good
relationship with someone and [we] become quite intimately involved in those sorts of discussions and then they leave ... but then you start all over again’ (8).

The practical experience of the learning advisor tends to be more one of getting ‘pushed out to the side as the toolbox people’ (11), being ‘institutionally pushed into doing these more generic, extracurricular things’(12). And this experience might just make us ‘go mad or kill someone’ (12) or ‘vomit’ (5). There is nothing more ‘frustrating’ (6), after all, than being constantly expected to ‘teach something that [you] don’t believe in’(12), or ‘being stuck on the margins’ (6,7), ‘always outside and always fixing up and waiting to be called on by some lecturer who is in serious strife with students’ (6). And nothing more ludicrous than a class full of students all from different faculties, ‘trying to teach ten of them how to write essays in a generic way’ (15), especially when the feedback is always ‘I wish it was related to ... what I have to do’ (15). In this case, we might suggest that we ‘don’t think our role is as important as we would like to think it is’ (6).

Perhaps the ALL project of freedom could focus less on the knowledge base and more on articulating the job – ‘as long as [you] know exactly what it is [you’re] here to do then [you] can learn how to do it quickly and well’ (12). This requires some articulation of ‘what it is we’re here to do and why it needs to be done’ (12). It also produces tensions. In most institutions, ‘the job is not well-defined’ (12), while for others it is too narrowly specified (15), or ‘very well-defined’ (8). Besides, ‘there is no permanent space’ (12) to arrive within as far as definitions and articulations go. We work in a dynamic environment where change is constant – ‘things change, things get refigured’ (12). We never arrive. And worse than that, ‘if you hang around long enough you see it all come back again. It’s all new and fantastic – the next wave of people come in with their ‘new’ ideas, and you think uhhh’ (11). Our units, our colleagues, our institutions, even our field suffers from a permanent long-term memory loss, the effects no doubt of the mythological telos of educational progress, and more locally, of the fact that ‘we are not strong enough as a profession yet to withstand the slings and arrows of outrageous management’ (7). In fact we could say that ‘we are dispensible’ and that ‘core business would go on with out us’ (1). This being the case, perhaps ‘the way ahead is only if we become strong as a profession’ (7).

At this point, I have the option of attempting to capture and contain these ontological and epistemological orientations of practitioners as in the work of Land (2004, 2006) in the field
of educational development. However, I am interested in maintaining truth in its dispersion, to question our ‘will to truth’ as way of maintaining a critical stance to the present (Foucault, 1972), and ‘disturb[ing] the dogmatism of identity’ (Connolly, 1991, px). This entails an examination of truth in terms of power/knowledge relations in order to establish its contingency (Hook, 2001). As Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) suggest, ‘the disruption of how we ‘tell the truth’ about ourselves and others is viewed as a political strategy for constructing options as the rules through which power is deployed are themselves made visible’ (p29).

2.5 Problematising ourselves

To understand how learning advisors have come to tell the ‘truth’ about themselves in these diverse ways, and in particular how it is that the statements above can and must be thought in the contemporary university, I begin from the notion that

…we do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do. In these terms we are spoken by policies, we take up the positions constructed for us within policies. This is a system of practices... and a set of values and ethics. (Ball, 1994, p22)

This is not to say that we are without agency, rather it recognises agency as firmly located within truth games – in the interstices between discourses of domination and discourses of the self. Compelled to tell the truth about ourselves, learning advisors take up the discourses available to maintain cultural intelligibility, to survive, to maintain relevance, to ward off vulnerability. And this can be demonstrated through an historical ontology which illustrates the way in which shifts in political reasoning about higher education and the problem of student learning invite learning advisors to reinscribe themselves in different ways.

As a starting point for the analysis undertaken in this thesis, I draw inspiration from Webb’s four discursive developments in the identity of the AALL practitioner, and Melles (2001) suggestion that

Our teaching practices as interpreters, mediators, researchers, and academics in the field of academic literacies take place as ‘micro’ instances of power/knowledge representations or discourses (Foucault, 1988) that define institutionalised education. (p11)
The historical ontology that I seek to produce is, therefore, one attempt to consider the instability of identity in the field – to consider how learning advisors have come to make sense in multiple ways – and to examine how we make sense of ourselves as ethical agents in the academy as an effect of power and politics. In doing so, I consider how we might problematise ourselves in a way that does not merely pay lip service to the political theme of the day and locate ourselves as central to the change process. Instead, I examine the political rationality underpinning the production of truth that warrants our existence and constructs our service in particular ways at particular times to do particular work.

The work of this thesis, therefore, is to engage with the will to truth as it applies to the profession by employing a critical perspective on contingency and difference in order to destabilise aspirations to ground learning advising politics in universals that might deny its historical, cultural and institutional complexity. It seeks to affirm the space of learning advisors in the academy, as Dumm (1996) suggests, as ‘a busy intersection… marked with many lines to be crossed or erased … many themes to be challenged and many truths to be found and lost’ (p25). Drawing on the work of Foucault, Dumm reminds us that recognising that we inhabit such a space, and learning to live with its impossibilities, is one means for coming to terms with ‘the paradox of the [learning advising] condition’ (p25).
CHAPTER THREE: HISTORICAL ONTOLOGY - PERSPECTIVE, DESIGN, METHOD

3.1 Introduction

As stated in the introduction, the major aim of this thesis is to produce an historical ontology of the learning advisor as a partial diagnosis of ‘what we are’ in the present (Foucault, 1997e). In Foucault’s 1978 lecture ‘What is critique?’, he posed the ontological question,

‘what, therefore, am I’, I who belong to this humanity, perhaps to this piece of it, at this point in time, at this instant of humanity which is subjected to the power of truth in general and truths in particular? (Foucault, 1997d, p46)

For Foucault, the critique of how we constitute ourselves as ‘moral agents in quite specific, local, historical ways’ is central to social and political philosophy (Hacking, 2002, p3). Foucault proposes this critical work as an ‘historical-philosophical practice’ (Foucault, 1997a). Neither pure history or pure philosophy, nor a prescriptive statement of method, this critical practice takes a philosophical lens to the analysis of historical data to identify those events ‘that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying’ (Foucault, 1984, p46). This is what Foucault refers to as historical ontology (1997b): a positive and practical critique (Wong, 2004) that provides us with the means to examine those shared discursive practices that have come to shape what we are today (Flood & Romm, 1996).

Rather than fabricating the learning advising subject as a coherent and unproblematic ethical agent with a unitary necessity in the present, historical ontology employs genealogical techniques and archaeological tools to trace the visible fractures in the learning advising identity and uncover their conditions of emergence. This kind of diagnostic, Foucault (1972) suggests,

… does not establish the facts of our identity by means of the interplay of distinctions. It establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of forms of discourse, our history is the difference of times, that our selves are the difference of masks. (p131)
This historical ontology, therefore, is concerned with making sense of learning advising as a complex interplay of distinct forms of historical, epistemological and political difference. This approach turns away from questions, such as ‘Where do we come from?’ and ‘Why are we here?’ I argue that these kinds of questions incorrectly seek to establish a foundational learning advising subject. Instead, I seek to describe the learning advising subject as an effect of discourse characterised by dispersion and contingency - the product of ‘multiple causation and polyhedric intelligibility’ (Bove & Empson, 2009). I do this by asking: ‘How have we come to constitute ourselves in various and particular ways? According to which historical regimes of truth? And how does this shape who we are in the present?’

Broadly, historical ontology interrogates the historical constitution of the subject (S) as occurring at the centre of three interacting dimensions: power, knowledge and ethics as shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Historical ontology dimensions of analysis](image)

The three questions this analysis entails, and those which frame the overall purpose of this thesis, are:

- How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge?
- How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations?
- How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions? (Foucault, 1984, p49)

To examine the learning advisor as an effect rather than the agent of discourse, however, it is necessary to decentre the learning advisor as the object of analysis. To do this, the lens of
governmentality is used to view the learning advisor as a technology of government in the academy that appears as an effect of the problematisation and representation of the subject of higher education. I argue that it is the historical and political constitution of the student as the subject of higher education and the object of government that has a direct bearing on who and what the learning advisor can ‘be’ in any particular historical moment. The subject located at the centre of the analysis, therefore, is not the learning advisor, but the higher education student. This will explained further in the discussion of Figure 3.

Viewing the learning advising subject as a technology of reform concerned with disciplining the subject of higher education (see also Grant, 1997), this historical ontology employs: the lens of governmentality to examine the constitution of the learning advisor as both agent and effect of power in the academy; a genealogical design to fragment the present by tracing the surface of emergence of four discursive ‘displacements’ in the identity of the learning advisor; and archaeological erudition to elaborate their conditions of emergence. Figure 3 attempts to illustrate the complex interaction between the perspective (governmentality), design (genealogy) and method (archaeology) undertaken in this thesis.

Figure 3: Diagrammatic representation of the analytical approach undertaken in this thesis.

As already shown in Figure 2, the three circles represent the broad dimensions of analysis for examining the historical constitution of the learning advising subject (S): power – knowledge – ethics. Figure 3 indicates how the historical constitution of the learning advising subject (S),
as interpreted through the lens of governmentality, is viewed through the historical constitution of the higher education student (s) as the object of government. Through this lens, the ethical agency of the learning advisor appears as an effect of the dynamic interaction between political reason (power), moral reasoning (ethics) and the intellectual processing of reality (knowledge) that problematises and represents the student of higher education as an object of governmental intervention. Learning advising thus appears in the realm of ‘intervention’. Accordingly, it is the historical changes to the political and economic constitution of the subject of higher education (s) that is shown to be central in producing intelligible versions of the learning advisor.

To demonstrate how the constitution of the learning advisor has shifted across time in relation to the problematisation and representation of the higher education student, genealogy is used to trace, isolate and compare four particular historical constitutions of ‘the learning advisor as intervention’. The tools of archaeology are then used to trace the conditions of emergence of the specific discursive formations that render specific problematisations, representations and interventions intelligible. All these dimensions are mutually-constituting and profoundly embedded in each other. At their centre are the conditions of existence that hold their intelligibility and legitimacy together albeit temporarily.

Rather than representing three successive levels of analysis, governmentality, genealogy and archaeology can be understood as ‘three necessarily contemporaneous dimensions in the same analysis’ (Foucault, 1997a, p59); that is, in the process of research and writing, these conceptual tools were employed simultaneously to identify and elaborate the distinct and singular positivities that have come to form the overall framework of the analysis sections of this thesis. Further, the non-linear design and execution of the research presents significant challenges to the writing of this section as the overlap between each dimension is substantial. However, in order to discern the separate contributions of each dimension of the analysis, I have chosen to organise it in the following way. I begin with governmentality as the overall lens for interpreting the learning advisor as both agent and effect of power. I then identify the key conceptual tools that frame the genealogical design of the study. Finally, I describe archaeology and the archive as the method for interrogating each of the identified discursive formations.
3.2 Governmentality and the diagnosis of moral agency

Drawing on Foucault’s notion of governmentality as an analytics of the operation of power in liberal society, I examine the constitution of the ethical agency of the learning advisor as an effect of political and moral reasoning about the government of conduct in the academy. My claim is that the ethical agency of the learning advisor is contingent on the political reasoning that constitutes and problematises the academy and the subject of higher education in particular ways for particular ends. Governmentality, thus, provides the lens through which the genealogical work in this study is conducted. However, where genealogy provides an overall technique for accounting for the historical identity/practice of the learning advisor as an effect of moral reasoning (ethics) and intellectual processing (knowledge), governmentality provides a keener lens to interpret the ethical constitution of the agency of the learning advisor as an effect of political reason.

The term ‘governmentality’ is used to describe a ‘conceptual architecture of power’ (Dean, 1999, p46), which sees power operating in a relational sense through the triangle of sovereignty, discipline and government (Fitzsimmons, 2002): sovereignty refers to the exercise of power on the social body through law and sanction; the discipline of individuals through institutions and techniques of surveillance, individualisation and normalisation; and government (or bio-power) of the population through the multiple institutional and interpersonal strategies and tactics for maximising the forces and capacities of the population (Rose, 1999, p23). Governmentality, in short, refers to those ‘techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour’ (Rose, 1999, p20) – the government of conduct, or ‘conduct of conduct’.

Governmentality was a term first coined by Foucault in the late 1970s, and has since been developed by others to analyse the operation of power in liberal society and to make sense of shifts in the various liberal modes of government (see, for example, Burchell, 1996; Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991; Dean, 1996; Dean, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Lemke, 2002; Rose, 1990). Foucault (1991) locates the emergence of this modern form of power with the ‘governmentalisation of the state’ and the emergence of political science, new forms of...
calculability that make visible a new field of intervention, namely the population and the economy. This does not mean, however, that governmentality as the operation of power is reducible to the State. Rather the State is merely one of the ‘tactics of government…a dynamic form and historic stabilisation of societal power relations’ (Lemke, 2002, p11).

Governmentality should not be confused with domination; rather it is deeply embedded in socio-political relationships and processes. Governmentality refers to power as a political and relational activity operating in a capillary way on and through the social body: where political activity refers to all the structural, social and self-regulatory mechanisms for governing the conduct of oneself and others, and where all political activity or practices are underpinned by a form of political reason or rationality about the conduct of conduct in liberal society.

3.2.1 Governmentality as a critique of political reason

Our reasoning about the world is never a pure philosophical question but part of social and power relations (Popkewitz, 1997, p133)

Governmentality is concerned with the critique of the operation and effects of ‘political rationality’ or ‘governmental reason’ (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Dean (1999) suggests

… the notion of government stands as an attempt to pose the question of the epistemological and technical conditions of existence of the political, to analyse the historical a priori by which we construct politics as a domain of thought and action, and to analyse the instrumentation, vocabulary and forms of reason by which this is done. (p47)

Governmentality recognises political rationalities as systems of reason that govern ‘the shape of the thinkable’ (Fitzsimmons, 2002), and therefore have a direct relationship with the discursive formations or regimes of truth that we identify with genealogy. Rose (1999) suggests that political rationalities are

…discursive fields characterised by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organised, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics, by commonly accepted facts, by significant agreement on the key political problems. (p28)

Political rationalities create registers of respectability and intelligibility (technologies of domination) through which citizens will regulate themselves and others (technologies of the
self). Studies of government from this perspective are therefore concerned with examining those registers according to their ethos, knowledge, vocabulary and mechanisms of power as the ‘conduct of conduct’ (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1990).

According to Dean (1999, p33), political rationalities can be discerned in terms of their ethos and telos: ethos is used to refer to the ‘utopian element’ of government while telos refers to the ideal form of society embodied in its reasoning and activities. Likewise, Rose (1990) suggests that political rationalities have ‘a distinctive moral form’ (p26), ‘an epistemological character’ (p26) and ‘a distinctive idiom or language’ (p27). The ‘ethos’ or ‘moral form’ can be discerned through its idiom or vocabulary - the governing metaphors that frame its thought and practices. As Rose (1990) suggests, although governing is a ‘genuinely heterogeneous dimension of thought…it can be captured to some extent in the multitude of words available to describe and enact it’ (p4). Hence, political rationalities can be discerned through the language they use and the meaning this embodies in relation to the idea of an optimal form of government and society.

A further useful heuristic has been proposed by Dean (1999, p18), who suggests that political reason can be diagnosed according to three dimensions: power (techne), truth (episteme) and identity (subject). ‘Techne’ refers to those ‘means, mechanisms, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies’ (p30) that are used to accomplish a certain authority in shaping the way we think about appropriate conduct. It involves the operation of power through technical means. ‘Episteme’ relates the formation of knowledge and truth in the process of governing, recognised in terms of ‘forms of thought, expertise, strategies, means of calculation’ (p30) that render the domain to be governed intelligible in specific ways. The ‘subject’ is the implicit dimension of government: governing assumes a particular identity of the governed. Governing society, thus, is synonymous with governing subjectivity (Marginson, 1995). But as Dean (1999) argues

Regimes of government do not determine forms of subjectivity; they elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statuses to particular agents. They are successful to the extent that these agents come to experience themselves through such capacities..., qualities..., and statuses... Much of the problem of government here is less one of identity than one of ‘identification’. (p33)

This is an important point that will be examined in depth. While we are not wholly governed by the prevailing discourses, we are compelled to engage in the games of truth they put into
play. Without recourse to a pre-discursive or foundational subject in learning advising, we are obliged to speak ourselves into existence. Therefore, it is possible to trace the various aspects of our narratives in terms of specific ‘identifications’ that have a history and a context.

3.2.2 Liberalism and apparatuses of security

From an historical perspective, studies of governmentality suggest that since the 19th Century, liberalism has been the dominant system of political reason framing the government of conduct in western societies (Burchell, 1996; Dean, 1996; Foucault, 1991). Liberal societies govern through notions of freedom: by focussing on ‘the life and efficiency of the body politic’ (Widder, 2004, p422), and colonising and regulating the identity and desire of its constituents.

Liberalism is said to have emerged in the 19th Century (Gordon, 1991) through the ‘governmentalisation of the state’ (Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1991). By the governmentalisation of the state, Foucault is referring to a transformation in the rationalities and technologies for the exercise of political rule (Rose, 1999), from feudal and warring, for example, to pastoral, calculative and economic. In this process, the state emerges as responsible for balancing the processes of the economy and society. This form of government ‘has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security’ (Foucault, 1991a, p102); it features a growing range of institutions, procedures and strategies for carrying out its responsibilities for the population and political economy.

Liberal government is characterised by its reflexivity – which Foucault suggests is the linking of techniques of power with forms of knowledge - its continual problematisation and reform of its own ethos and strategies for balancing the needs of the population with the demands of economic prosperity (Dean, 1999; Rose, 1999). Thus, we have experienced over the course of history, various modes of liberal government: classical liberalism, social liberalism and market liberalism/ neoliberalism. Each reinvention emerges out of the failure of the former. A broad overview suggests classical liberalism dominated the 19th Century, but was displaced by social liberalism in the early 20th Century after its inability to secure the well-being of the population during the Great Depression. Social liberalism can be said to have peaked and
failed in Australia as elsewhere with the welfare regime of the Whitlam era in the 1970s. At this point, the emergence of market and neoliberalism can be identified, which still appears to dominate today. It is argued that: with the emergence of a social liberal form of government, universities became harnessed to the political economy as key socialising and mobilising institutions; and with the emergence of neoliberalism, they are transformed into international quasi-corporations competing in an increasingly ‘free’ market.

3.2.3 Society, economy, education: the university as an apparatus of government

In a liberal society, education, along with health and other ‘social’ services, are regarded as ‘apparatuses of security’ designed to protect and regulate the conduct of citizens. State sponsored mass education, then, can be understood as a liberal project that emerged in a specific historical context. Drawing on the work of Hunter (1994), Tait (2001, p96) argues that ‘mass schooling became one of the most important and convenient mechanisms for implementing specific forms of self-cultivation and distributing them to the mass population’. From the 1920s, mass education in all its guises emerged as part of the broader liberal governmental agenda of modernising society and the economy as educational knowledge shifted from art to science (Barcan, 1965). During the 1950s and 60s in particular, all educational institutions were transformed into social and public institutions harnessed to the agendas of the modern state and the exigencies of the political economy. In the 1950s, during the era of post-war reconstruction, this also became true of higher education. Universities became an important apparatus of the governmental state extending the social reform agenda of secondary school while simultaneously becoming an important provider for the economy.

If we take as the starting point that the State has a regulatory role in liberal societies, and that we now live in what has been referred to as a neoliberal or advanced liberal society (Allport, 2000; Apple, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Lakes, 2008; Lemke, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005), education must be seen as a key institution through which the management and control of the population is administered (Morrs, 1992, 1996). In a liberal democracy, the very purpose of education is to ‘refore individuals at the level of their personal skills and competencies’ (Barry, et al., 1996, p1).
However, despite the reference to State planning and control, it is possible to view the university in its current guise as an *ad hoc* apparatus of the State. Hunter’s (1996) work provides considerable insight in this regard. His genealogy of the modern school system demonstrates how it can be viewed as an effect of the liberal mode of governance, and ‘an improvised historical institution - assembled from the moral and material grab-bag of western culture; providing a means of dealing with specific exigencies; and capable of nothing more than contingent solutions to limited problems’ (Hunter, 1996, p148).

Mass schooling then, if we view education systems through the lens of governmentality, can be seen as an *ad hoc* yet highly significant apparatus of the State designed precisely for the ‘cultural transformation of the population carried out in the interests of the State… [This means] that the State should intervene in education as a means of enhancing its corporate wealth and prosperity, and thereby the well-being of its citizens’ (Hunter, 1996, p151). Higher education too can be seen to have been similarly annexed to the governmental agenda from the post-war reconstruction era to the present day. Since World War II, the university and higher learning have come to be problematised through the governmental gaze in a number of ways that can be understood through an historical lens as situated economic, social and cultural concerns with ‘how to govern’ the population for the ‘mundane objectives of the state - social order, economic prosperity and social welfare’ (Hunter, 1996, p153).

While it can be argued that the State has and does play a major role in ‘training behaviour, educating minds and disciplining souls’ (Fendler, 1999, p185), the emphasis in studies of governmentality is on the way in which conduct is shaped and regulated at a micro-level; that is, at the level of practices. An analysis of governing, then, requires us to look not just at ‘formally rationalised statements’ (Rose, 1999, p4), such as policy documents, but also to the practical rationalities embedded in particular kinds of practices. As Rose (1999) states,

> Foucault implied that rather than framing investigations in terms of state or politics, it might be more productive to investigate the formation and transformation of theories, proposals, strategies and technologies for the ‘conduct of conduct’. (p3)

This is particularly pertinent to the study of the learning advisor in higher education, where this discursive field of practices is embedded in a liberal democratic educational system and works at the capillary ends of power in the academy. It is important, thus, to examine the
intelligibility of the learning advisor within its socio-political context: within the regime of truth about the government of conduct.

3.2.4 Learning advising as a technology of reform

Through this lens, learning advising appears as a practice of government: a discursive and institutional field of practice concerned with the higher education student as the object of government. The learning advisor, thus, can be interpreted as a technology of performance that emerged in a particular historical moment and has since undergone discursive changes (displacements and transformations). The lens of governmentality allows us to diagnose these developments/displacements in the learning advisor’s historical constitution as an effect of shifts in historico-political reasoning about the academy and the higher education student.

It is argued that the reason why learning advising did not exist prior to the 1960s was not necessarily because universities were elite institutions with high performing students, although this is the dominant narrative. Rather, their emergence was due to a shift in the discursive and regulatory environment in which universities were required to operate, and that required universities to improvise with existing resources. At the widest aperture in this thesis, I use the perspective of governmentality to identify a shift in the discursive agency of the learning advisor from ‘agent of redemption’ in a welfare society to ‘agent of change’ in a learning society. This shift represents a significant rupture in how the learning advisor is deployed and invited to see him/her self as a moral agent in the government of conduct: from the diagnosis and discipline of difference to the prediction of risk and the regulation of performance.

3.3 Genealogy as the diagnosis of displacement/ dispersion

Through the lens of governmentality, the genealogical design of this thesis traces various shifts in the historical constitution of the learning advisor as a technology of government working upon the conduct of the discursively-constituted higher education student. A genealogical approach isolates and traces the emergence of specific discursive formations that give rise to new ways of problematising and representing the subject of higher education (Burchell, 1996). In this sense, it historicises questions of ontology and promotes a
nominalist, comparative and differential method to the examination of learning advising as an historical phenomenon (Besley, 2005; Burchell, 1996; Flynn, 1994; Hook, 2001). The intention of such a method is to reveal our ‘inventedness’ (Burchell, 1996, p30), to fragment the present (Barry, et al., 1996; Foucault, 1977a), to make the familiar strange (Brown, 2003a; Foucault, 1980a; Lee & McWilliam, 2008), and trace those fractures where new possibilities for thinking ‘otherwise’ might appear (McWilliam, 2004; St Pierre, 1997a).

Whereas traditional historical writing might concern itself with origins, foundations and coherent explanations of where learning advisors have come from and why they are here, genealogy is post-foundational and post-historicist: it refuses the search for origins, the assumption of foundations and the totality of the present (Foucault, 1977a). As Foucault (1977a) suggests

The purpose of the genealogy is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, ...it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us...its intention is to reveal the heterogeneous systems which, masked by the self, inhibit the formation of any form of identity. (p162)

The purpose of this genealogical investigation, then, is to dismantle the developmental narrative of progress by dissembling or breaking apart the seeming unity and self-evidence of the learning advisor to provide a picture of the field as a ‘broken and uneven place, heavily inscribed with habit and sedimented understandings’ (Spivak, 1991, p177 in Lather, 1993, p674).

3.3.1 Genealogy as critical strategies

Genealogy can be wielded in a number of ways. Ransom (1997), for example, discerns a range of genealogical strategies broadly categorised under the headings ‘historical’ and ‘political’. The historical strategies, as discerned by Ransom (1997), include the genealogy of ‘contingency’, ‘battle lines’ and ‘comparative genealogy’ while the political strategies involve the ‘creation of new power/knowledge circuits that can compete with and supplant old ones’ and to ‘undermine historical objects that are uncritically accepted’ (p96). Accordingly, historical strategies focus more on dismantling received truths while political strategies are more explicitly and proactively transformative and future-oriented. Although discerned here
as separate strategies, in this study these strategies are not mutually exclusive but are used together and distinguished at different junctures to make different points. Ransom’s analysis and its relevance to this study will be discussed in fuller detail below.

**The reversal of discourse**

Ransom (1997) begins by describing the ‘reversal of discourse’ as one of the common political tactics for resistance, which has its strengths and fundamental weaknesses. It is possible to identify this tactic in the learning advising politics of truth as we engage in resistance to discourses surrounding the nature and locus of our work. Ransom (1997) provides a short critique of the ‘reversal of discourse’ as a political tactic suggesting that while it can be effective because it utilises knowledge as the site of resistance through the reversal of a particular discourse (p82): it is also ‘quickly blocked, being unable to do anything except repeat [itself]’ (p84), to the point that nothing changes and people stop listening. This is of profound significance to the learning advisors’ political mantra of reversal ‘we are developmental, not remedial’, or more to the point ‘academic literacy is a matter of development rather than remediation’, which tends to fall largely on deaf ears and disinterest (see Barthel, 2007; Bock & Gassin, 1982; Bock & Lewit, 1984; Casazza, 1999; Skillen & Mahoney, 1997; Stevenson & Kokkin, 2007).

Part of the problem of this reversal, of course, is that the remedial/ developmental divide is in fact part of the same discourse and is still identified with the same educational practice - the individual consultation. The individual consultation, because of its history, location and ongoing purpose, is still concerned with the ‘discipline’ of the student (the remedial case), whether or not we regard the instruction as developmental. As a political tactic, mere reversal is not adequate in resisting the discourse that brought this particular practice into being in the first place. Even the plethora of theoretical work on literacy in Australia, the UK and the US (for example, Baynham, 1995; Bazerman, 1988; Cazden, et al., 1997; Gee, 1992; Golebiowski, 1997; Kalantzis, Cope, & Hughes, 1983; Lo Bianco, Bryant, & Baldauf, 1997; Luke & Gilbert, 1993; Street, 1984) has changed little in terms of institutional considerations of student learning assistance where the individual consultation is concerned. In light of this, this thesis takes an alternative strategy for critique. Rather than attempting to disprove those discourses which constrain identity, the ‘historical’ and ‘political’ genealogical strategies
employed in this thesis are concerned with tracing how these discourses have conditioned and continue to haunt who we are in the present.

**Historical strategies**

As stated above, according to Ransom (1997), historical strategies include ‘contingency’, ‘battle lines’ and ‘comparative’ genealogy, and are used to demonstrate disparity and chance in what had previously been regarded as unified and necessary. As Foucault (1977) has said

The deepest truth that the genealogist has to reveal is the secret that [things] have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. (p142)

In this thesis, ‘contingency’ is the key principle for delineating the emergence of four historical notions of the learning advisor in ACTs I – IV. This is done to demonstrate the complexification of the learning advisor in the present as the product of layered problematisations, histories, rationalities and strategies for governing conduct in the academy. But contingency has two layers. While each ACT unearths those contingencies that rendered particular versions of the learning advisor intelligible, there are also those contingencies that have become entrenched aspects of our own identity (Connolly, 1991). One such example that will be explored is the insistence that we ‘make a difference’. Through the ‘comparative’ analysis made possible by the juxtaposition of each ACT, the learning advisor in the present appears as ‘a cobbled patchwork of heterogeneous elements’ (Ransom, 1997, p88). The genealogy of ‘battle lines’ focuses on those historical moments of arising, the emergences where a number of discourses can be seen to compete for dominance. A particularly useful example of this will be found in ACT-II of this thesis where learning advisors, educational developers and counsellors are shown to be engaging in the production of ‘differences’ as a form of boundary work to demarcate the locus of their expertise and carve their niche as specialised units in the academy.

**Political strategies**

In terms of political strategies, this thesis has a political aim in its desire to mock the mastery of contingency and the security of identity as a project of freedom. Freedom is rewritten, not as the transcendence of power relations, or the mastery of contingency, but as a commitment
to ‘not being governed so much’ (Foucault, 1997d; Ransom, 1997). Recognising the individual as ‘made up of a shifting coalition of forces’ (Ransom, 1997, p185), ‘neither independent nor wholly defined by social powers’ (p168), freedom becomes a matter of daily ethico-political choices and the participation in self-formation.

Despite the obvious destabilising aims of genealogy, it does not promote nihilism or relativism (Barry, et al., 1996). Genealogy is intended as a particular kind of practice of freedom: the means of tracing limits in order to transgress them. Foucault (1984) suggests in ‘What is Enlightenment?’

The overcoming of the foundational character of the transcendental perspective consists in not deducing from the form of what we are what we can do and know, but in catching from the contingency, that makes us be what we are, the possibility of not being, not doing and not thinking what we are, do and think. (p46)

With its emphasis on contingency rather than culmination, genealogy is highly productive in its ability to ‘flush out assumptions’ (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p30) and to sharpen our critical stance towards the present (Dean, 1999).

3.3.2 Genealogy as analytical techniques

Although genealogy is more an ethos and an attitude (Foucault, 1984) than a prescriptive empirical method, it offers a range of analytical techniques which inform the design and undertaking of this study. This thesis employs the genealogical techniques of evacuating the historical subject and fragmenting the present using the tactics offered by: the delineation of discursive formations; the identification and isolation of particular problematisations; and the description of the ‘events’ that shape the present. These are described below.

Evacuating the historical subject (historical nominalism)

Unlike a metaphysical ontology that would account for the historical subject in terms of its physiological ‘being’ or agency, genealogy recognises the historical subject as an effect of discourse and discursive practices, an effect of language, knowledge and power in action. Rather than assume the agency of the historical subject, genealogy does the critical work of investigating how agency appears as an effect of power. To do this, genealogy radically
historicises the subject (Peters, 2003) by removing it from the centre of analysis. It is through this crucial analytical manoeuvre that genealogy may attend to the discursive formations that govern the constitution of the subject without recourse to a priori notions of agency and actor. The historical subject then reappears and may be read as an effect of the historical, social and political conditions that render it intelligible (Popkewitz, 1997, p139).

Removing the historical subject from the centre of analysis is a genealogical technique to represent ‘agency’ as a discursive and historical effect rather than a self-evident fact. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) stress the importance of de-naturalising agency in critical work, arguing that where agency is naturalised, ‘there is a tendency to lose sight of how the agendas and categories that define oppositions are historically formed’ (p25). According to Popkewitz and Brennan (1998), the reappearance of the actor/agent as an effect of truth and power creates a paradox that dislodges the ‘ordering principles that define our subjectivities’ (p25). This, they suggest, creates ‘a greater range of possibility for action’ (p25) - the possibility of refusing what we are.

This technique is particularly important for the study of learning advisors where in previous studies, their agency has been located at the centre of change, appearing necessary, natural and unproblematic (eg. Skillen, et al., 1999; Webb, 2001). This rendition of agency, however, has hindered a fuller account of its contingency on the convergence of social, political and historical circumstance.

*Fragmenting the present*

Another important tactic of genealogy is the way that it fragments the present by rearranging historical data into new configurations using the tactics offered by: the delineation of discursive formations; the identification and isolation of particular problematisations; and the description of the ‘events’ that shape us today. Using these tactics, genealogy seeks to disaggregate the tangled web of sedimented truths and historical practices that have their imprint in the present. It is via these tactics that the present is ‘cut up and decomposed so that it can be seen as put together contingently out of heterogeneous elements each having their own conditions of possibility’ (Barry, et al., 1996, p5). This produces a perspectival, partial, differential and comparative lens with which to view the repetition of the past in the present.
So it is that genealogy is a reproduction of history as singular ‘events’ whose visible transformation can be traced as the contingent effects of power/knowledge arrangements and historical, political and social circumstance (Foucault, 1997a). This involves the identification, elaboration and differentiation of discursive formations, in terms of their vocabularies, forms of reason, mechanisms and subjectification that govern what we think, say and do at any historical moment.

In this study, the present is fragmented by the isolation of what could be considered through a teleological lens as four discursive ‘developments’ in the professional identity of the learning advisor (see ACTS I – IV). Rather than representing these as ‘developments’, however, each shift is delimited as a singularity or positivity and interpreted as a displacement, an effect of a shift in the discursive formations, or power/knowledge arrangements, that frame the university and the higher education student. This is where archaeological erudition comes into play. Whereas genealogy is concerned with the effects of discourse, and with tracing the displacements and transformations between their formations, archaeology is concerned with the internal workings of discourse, its conditions of emergence, its rules of formation, and its means of circulation. Archaeology, thus, provides the means for digging out the assumptions and artifice that underpin each formation.

In the case of this study, each development in the historical constitution of the learning advisor can be interpreted according to the historical, social and political conditions that render it intelligible: this involves delineating and tracing discursive formations along their surface of emergence, identifying and isolating specific problematisations of the university and the student, and describing the events that continue to shape learning advisors today.

Discursive formations provide the broad analytical framework for the overall structure of this thesis (ACTS I–IV). Each ACT locates the emergence of a displacement in the historical constitution of the learning advisor within a discursive formation that represents an alignment of a particular way of thinking about (episteme) and acting on (techne) the university and the university student in a range of texts and practices across a number of institutions (Hall, 2001, p73).

Discursive formations can be analysed according to the genealogical axes of analysis: power-knowledge and truth-subject, as shown in Figure 3. These axes of analysis demonstrate how the truth about the historical subject must be read as an effect of knowledge-power.
arrangements. This technique is employed to demonstrate how developments in the identity/practice of the learning advisor are contingent on specific discursive formations that ‘tell the truth’ about the university and student in particular ways (Fendler, 1999).

![Figure 3: The axes of analysis for discursive formations](image)

*Figure 3: The axes of analysis for discursive formations*  
(Adapted from Harwood, 2000),

The notion of discourse is fundamental to genealogy. In Foucauldian terms, discourses ‘systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1972, p49); they do not simply represent a material reality, but constitute it (Hall, 2001). To illustrate this point, Ball (1994) suggests

…discourse is more than language and speech ... we do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do. (p21)

In Foucauldian terms, discourses are not limited to language alone, but are the enactment of power/knowledge relations, and as such are powerful ‘forms of practice’ (Foucault, 1972 cited in Flynn, 1994, p30). Discursive practices refer to ‘all the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed’ (Foucault, 1997c, p177); the material and intellectual practices that constitute and act upon the subject in particular ways for particular ends. Flynn assists with thinking about practices in this way by defining them as ‘a pre-conceptual, anonymous, socially sanctioned body of rules that govern one’s manner of perceiving, judging, imagining, and acting’ (Flynn, 1994, p30).

From this perspective, it is not possible to speak the truth outside of discourse; there is no pre-discursive subject. Making sense of the learning advising subject is always already colonised
by and subjected to those discourses that allow us to speak the truth about ourselves. Young (1981) states

The effect of discursive practices is to make it virtually impossible to think outside of them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason. (cited in Hook, 2001, p522)

But truth is not universal or necessarily long-lasting. The truth only persists as long as the conditions for its emergence sustain it: eventually it is transformed, superseded, forgotten in the will to knowledge, as Foucault (1977a) states

Truth is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history… but if you look you will see there is a history of truth, as new truths enter and supersede old ‘truths’. (p144)

Importantly, discourses are multiple and conflicting, constantly engaged in a power/knowledge struggle in the ‘will to truth’ where particular alignments see particular ways of thinking and talking about and acting on subjects become more intelligible than others at particular historical junctures. Foucault’s approach to historical subjects was largely about tracing just such shifts in alignments, or epistemic shifts, as a way of diagnosing the various power/knowledge arrangements at work. Rouse (1994) argues that ‘Foucault’s studies were directed toward significant changes in the ‘discursive formations’ that governed the serious possibilities for talking about things’ (p94). Rather than attempt to explain these shifts, Foucault sought to ‘display the structural differences they embody’ (Rouse, 1994, p94). To demonstrate the historical contingency of each discursive ‘displacement’ in the identity of the learning advisor, each development is traced along the surface of emergence of a particular discursive formation that involves new meanings and new ways of making sense of higher education and the problem of student learning. The surface of emergence is that ‘moment of arising’ (Foucault, 1977, p148), where new meanings, new power relationships and new practices come to take a privileged place in the social psyche. Foucault suggests emergence involves struggle, it is ‘the entry of forces, it is their eruption’ (Foucault, 1977, p148), and therefore also marks displacement, transformation, rupture or reversal. It involves the identification of a moment where one way of speaking, thinking and acting is displaced or transformed by another. This particular analysis is enabled by the identification and isolation of specific historical problematisations.
Discursive formations tend to congeal around particular problematisations of the subject/object of government. Through the lens of governmentality, problematisation is interpreted as the appearance of problems as they are posed about particular subjects as objects of government (Flynn, 1994). An important tactic of genealogy is concentration, not on periods of time, but on the way subjects become problematised as objects in specific ways at specific times towards specific ends. In this study, I ask how the conduct of the higher education student is problematised, according to which regimes of knowledge and to what effect?

Problematisations can be seen to emerge out of various social, political and economic circumstances, and as such can be read as the effect of particular power/knowledge arrangements. Problematisation, therefore, provides an important analytical lens for locating and elaborating particular discursive formations, their contingencies and their effects. In this thesis, I examine how various historical problematisations of higher education have created discursive openings that have rendered different versions of the learning advisor intelligible and invited, if not demanded, learning advisors to tell the truth about themselves in particular ways at particular times.

In addition to delineating discursive formations and identifying problematisations, the location of the ‘event’ is another important tactic in a genealogical analysis (Flynn, 1994). Events mark out the ruptures and reversals in power relations that set in train the possibilities of the present. In this sense, we may consider them threshold events that transform truth and power relations. According to Flynn (1994), ‘events can be practices, statements, epistemological breaks, micro-exercises of power in the capillaries of the body politic’ (p40). The events that I have selected in my study include the annexation of the university to the demands of the political economy in the 1950s, the emergence of university education as a social right in the 1970s, the transformation of university into ‘big business’ in the 1980s. These events, I suggest, when seen in context produce truth/power effects that have their mark on the learning advisor today. The present is thus represented as ‘a profusion of entangled events’ which can be somewhat unravelled through genealogical work (Foucault, 1977, p155).
3.4 Archaeology and the conditions of emergence

‘...the method is archaeology of knowledge, and the precise domain of the analysis is what I should call technologies. I mean the articulation of certain techniques and certain kinds of discourses about the subject’ (Foucault, 1997c, p178)

While genealogy fragments the present by isolating various displacements in the learning advisor’s historical constitution, archaeology is the primary method for making sense of these as rupture and discontinuity. Archaeology is the method for delimiting and rendering visible the ‘discursive formations’, ‘regimes of truth’ or ‘ensembles’ that allow these various displacements to make sense. Archaeology carves out the contours of these formations by locating them in their positivity and describing them in terms of their system of dispersion and their rules of formation: their surface of emergence, authorities of delimitation and grids of specification (Foucault, 1972). According to Foucault, discursive formations or ‘ensembles can be described in their positivity by identifying their moment of acceptance and traced through an entire system of acceptability’ (Foucault, 1997, p53). Positivities represent singularities, not essences or foundations: the search is for their conditions of existence or acceptability.

In ‘What is critique?’, Foucault (1997a) suggests that archaeological method requires two simultaneous operations: identifying ‘the conditions of acceptability of a system and follow[ing] the breaking points which indicate its emergence’ (p54). For Foucault, identifying the acceptability of a system of truth necessarily involves accounting for its ‘artifices’ (p55). Archaeology, thus, involves an examination of the archive of a discursive formation (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). This work seeks to isolate and describe particular discursive formations as they pertain to a particular subject. Importantly, it illustrates the mutually conditioning nature of the relationship between the sayable and the visible – that is, between discourse and ‘reality’ (Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, Webb’s (2001) professional ontogenesis and identification of the four subject positions of the learning advisor in Australian higher education - the remediator, the mediator, the integrator and the transformer – provides a useful analysis to begin my study. However, rather than accept them as given, I want to problematise them, to question their agency, to understand their conditions of emergence and
how they have come to function as ‘true’. According to what problematisations did these particular subject positions make sense? To engage with this question, I begin with the assumption that these could be considered as four discursive displacements in the identity of the learning advisor, the product of various historical problematisations that could be examined through a genealogical study. The aim, therefore, is to trace the surface of emergence of these four displacements in order to understand what is continuous or discontinuous between them.

3.4.1 The archive

Fundamental to archaeological analysis is the examination of the ‘archive’. The archive refers to ‘the set of discourses actually pronounced’ (Foucault cited in Flynn, 1994, p29); ‘not just any discourses, but the set that conditions what counts as knowledge in a particular period’ (Flynn, 1994, p29). It represents knowledge and practices that count as legitimate. Flynn (1994, p30) argues that archives are ‘time bound and factual; they are discovered, not deduced; they are the locus of practices as "positivities" to be encountered, not as ‘documents’ to be interpreted....these practices are to be registered as facts’. In this thesis, the archive consists of what I have broadly classified into historical and interview data that trace the past into the present. The historical data is used to trace the emergence, acceptance and circulation of specific articulations regarding the subject of higher education and the work of the learning advisor as evidence of the discursive formation delineated by each ACT. Despite the shifting conditions and contexts, the interview data, collected with learning advisors in 2008, is then used to show how these specific articulations continue to play out in the various ways we make sense of ourselves in the present. The aim of this approach is to demonstrate the historical, epistemological and political complexity of the contemporary learning advisor in Australian higher education.

Analyzing the historical archive

The archive data consists of a range of texts, artefacts and practices from within the learning advising community, at the government and institutional level, within educational research, particularly around language, literacy and learning, and within higher education research and practice. Particular points of interest in the analysis of the archive include the struggles and transformations in historical and political definitions of what constitutes a university
education and the higher education student. A diagram of the historical archive can be seen in Figure 4 and is described in more detail below.

![Diagram of historical archive](image)

*Figure 4: Historical archive*

To be more specific, the historical archive includes documents from the 1940s to the present:

- International reports on higher education, such as those produced by the OECD and UNESCO (1970-present);
- Government policy and practice, such as statements, policies, practices and broader social policy informing educational initiatives (1950-present);
- The publications and reports from the field of learning advising, such as conference proceedings, journal articles and monographs (1978-present);
- Learning advisors artefacts, such as professional association statements, position statements, conference titles, discussion forums and job descriptions (1980-present);
- Educational research, such as publications, conference proceedings, journal articles and monographs on higher education, student learning, literacy and language (1909-present); and
- Higher education research, such as publications around academic development, the role and purpose of higher education, critique of policy and reform, post-structuralist approaches to education and definitions on the ERIC Digest thesaurus (1960-present).

When I first began the research, I was concerned with capturing the various truths about the learning advisor as the subject of this study across a range of documents in the archive. Very quickly, however, it became apparent that outside the dialogue occurring within the field itself, documentation about whom and what the learning advisor is and does were few and far
between. Where documentation within the field revealed enormous diversity on a number of levels, in policy documents and higher education reports, for example, the substance of ‘learning assistance’ or ‘study skills’ was generally taken for granted. What bound these practitioners together as a field were not their qualifications, expertise or approach, but the similarity in their institutional deployment and the discourses available to make sense of themselves and their work. Rather than a ‘discipline’ by any means of the word, learning advising could be better understood as a field of institutionally-sanctioned practices.

It became clear that making sense of the conditions of the intelligibility of the learning advisor required more than a focus on the subject of the study. It was possible to have used the learning advising archive alone to trace the various developments in their own constitution, but I was more concerned with examining the discourses of domination. Rather than focusing directly on the learning advisor, it was necessary to focus on the object and rationality of the practices labelled as ‘learning assistance’. Using the ‘tree of derivation’ technique (Foucault, 1972, p147), and seeking evidence across all facets of the archive, I engage in an iterative process examining those governing statements that problematise the university and the student in particular ways according to particular modes of reasoning, to locate them in their moment of positivity from initial acceptance to the kinds of intellectual technologies drawn on to make sense of the ‘problem’, and the kinds of interventions that appear sensible within these particular regimes of thinking about the problem of government.

The ‘tree of derivation’ technique, as described by Foucault (1972), was used to structure the analytical framework of each ACT. It locates at the root of each discursive displacement of the learning advisor the convergence of historical and political conditions that reconfigure the university as an apparatus of government and produce a ‘definition of observable structures and the field of possible objects’ to be governed (Foucault, 1972, p147). From the identification of the field of possible objects of government, it then traces the subsequent problematisation that ‘prescribe[s] the forms of description and the perceptual codes...that reveal the most general possibilities of characterisation, and thus open up a whole domain of concepts to be constructed’ (p147).

The four discursive displacements in the identity of the learning advising subject that frame the analysis in the forthcoming chapters were identified by asking:
In relation to which objects do we recognise the emergence and transformation of learning advising as a field of practice?

According to what historical circumstance and power/knowledge relations did this object emerge as a problem of government?

On the basis of what systems of regularity was this object defined, represented and intervened upon?

Which practices became privileged, and according to what political reasoning?

What transformations, ruptures or discontinuities have since occurred?

Once the four discursive displacements were tentatively identified, they were then analysed using the following four questions:

- What conditions led to the constitution of the university as a particular kind of apparatus of government (eg. development panacea, social equaliser)?

- How is the university problematised? By whom? According to what reason?

- How did the reconfiguration of the university as an apparatus of government reconstitute the higher education student as the object of government?

- How is the higher education student represented as an object of governing activity?

- What activities/interventions therefore become possible, and even necessary, in relation to these particular historical problematisations and representations?

According to the principles of the ‘tree of derivation’ technique, each ACT examines how the particular problematisation ‘open[s] up a whole domain of concepts to be constructed, and … leave[s] room for the greatest number of subsequent options’ (p147). Where ‘at the end of those branches, or at various places in the whole’ we might find ‘a burgeoning of discoveries …conceptual transformations…the emergence of new notions [and/or] technical improvements’ (p147). It is at the ends of specific branches that learning advising practices are shown to emerge as intelligible.

The interview data

In addition to the historical data, interview data is used to trace the residue of these formations in the narrative of contemporary practitioners. Human Research Ethics approval was obtained
to conduct interviews with seventeen learning advisors across six Australian universities located in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia. To ensure the interviews captured variation, the universities selected included at least one of the four ‘types’ of Australian university identified by Marginson (1999a): that is, Sandstone and Red Brick (incl. Group of 8); Gumtree universities (post-Martin, pre-Dawkins); New universities (post-Dawkins, combined CAEs); and Unitech universities (institutions of technology). The specific universities targeted were also selected because they represented a variety of ‘models’ in the provision of student learning assistance although there are no clear patterns of provision within or across the various identified ‘types’ of university.

It is important to note that discerning ‘models’ in the provision of learning assistance is not an exact science. Each institution has multiple variations: for example, one of the so-called ‘Gumtree’ universities operates with a centralised service model, where the majority of its learning advisors are employed as academics to work mainly with faculty staff, while another ‘Gumtree’ university employs learning advisors as academics to work mainly with students. A ‘Unitech’ university employs learning advisors as academic staff to provide both centralised services to students located in a services division, and work inside faculties to embed core subjects into degree programs; while a Go8 university employs its learning advisors as general staff to work in a centralised model almost exclusively with students. Despite the attention to difference in the selection of universities and units, these institutional differences are regarded as less relevant to this thesis than the differences in the discourses drawn on by each practitioner to make sense of their role.

The interview participants captured difference in a variety of ways. Some were relatively new to the field while others had up to twenty years experience. Some had gained doctorates from the disciplines while others had education or linguistics qualifications. Three were men and the rest were women, which is a fairly representative sample from this highly feminised workforce.17 Some were required to work mainly on English language issues with international students, some were working on academic literacy issues with all students, and some were not working with students at all.

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17 At the time of writing in November 2010, 24% (42) of the 216 registered members of AALL were male.
The interviews were conducted over a four month period in the latter half of 2008. The interview participants were initially contacted by mail and asked to participate in an interview process exploring the nature of learning advising in Australian higher education. The purpose of these interviews was not to obtain a general representative perspective of learning advising knowledge and practice, but to capture momentarily the discourses that emerge in our narratives as we speak ourselves into existence (St Pierre, 1997a; Tamboukou, 2010). For this reason, face to face semi-structured interviews that lasted between 60-90 minutes were used to explore the discursive resources that learning advisors draw on to make sense of their work. In this case, narratives are taken as ‘textual effects of specific socio-historical and cultural milieus’ (Tamboukou, 2010, p21). Accordingly, the interview questions were open-ended and were delivered in the following order:

- How did you become a learning advisor?
- When did you feel that you had ‘arrived’, and ‘how’?
- Were there key moments – epiphanies?
- What role do you think learning advisors play in higher education?
- Is there anything unique about it?
- What contribution would you say you make?
- In an ideal world, what would you hope to achieve as a learning advisor?
- Which practices would you suggest are the most effective and why?
- What sorts of things enable you to do a good job?
- Are there constraints on what you are able to achieve? Could you give me some examples?
- What wisdom do you draw on to inform your practice?
- How would you describe your expertise?
- What qualities make an effective learning advisor?

These questions were written in this way to elicit a reflective response from each of the participants in order to trace elements of identification with particular ways of thinking and talking about the learning advising field.

The interview data was transcribed and analysed for traces of the discursive formations identified from the analysis of historical data in each ACT. This was done through an analysis of the components of discourse as outlined by McHoul and Grace (1993, p44): that is, the stated ‘objects’ of their practices; the ‘operations’ or practices themselves; the prevailing ‘concepts’ used to describe the field of practice; and the ‘theoretical options’ drawn on to make sense of practice. Importantly, as Tamboukou (2010) has suggested, a genealogical
analysis of this data does not search ‘for hidden meanings or truths’ (p27); rather it focuses on the surface of narratives in order to identify different ways of speaking the truth. In this manner, the analysis is capable of working with the multiplicity of meaning in the field and mapping the interrelationship between stories, discourses and practices (Tamboukou, 2010).

Taking this approach to the interview data, each interview was then sliced according to the various aspects that could be interpreted as pertaining to each of the discursive formations delimited by each ACT. These are woven together at the end of each ACT in the section Correspondence to the present where it is demonstrated how aspects of the historical discourses contained in each ACT continue to have salience today. This section in each ACT, however, does not simply present correspondent views, but attempts to outline the tensions around the particular truths being presented. Because of this, this section occasionally reads as cacophony. I regard this as an important technique for ensuring that the narratives do not appear as easily delineated and seamless. Rather they represent dissonance and tension even where there is agreement.

In presenting the data, one of my highest priorities was to maintain the anonymity of the participants in what is still a relatively small professional field in Australia. Further, my interest was not to examine what is continuous and discontinuous inside or across each individual’s narrative: for the most part; I take it for granted that we speak across discourses and may prioritise some discursive resources over others at different times and in different contexts (Scheurich, 1995). As Foucault has suggested, the subject ‘is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not always primarily identical to itself’ (Foucault, 1997a, p290). As such, I allocate a unique number to each individual and intentionally re-present their decontextualised statements as woven fragments of the discursive resources found in the various dimensions of the professional narrative today. This approach draws on the insight of Tamboukou (2008), who suggests that narratives should be read as ‘discursive events that express only a limited set of lines of thought interwoven around moments of being temporarily crystallized into narrative forms’ (p284).

Using the interview data in this way places specific ethical and intellectual limitations on this work. At an ethical level, I forfeit the imperative of maintaining narrative in its context (Tamboukou, 2008) to the imperative of maintaining anonymity. At an intellectual level, I forfeit representing the messiness of individual experience for the delimited and
depersonalised analysis I have selected. I am acutely aware of these limitations. It is possible that a case-based or oral history approach, as we have seen in the field of academic development (Lee, et al., 2008), would have provided a rich narrative approach to this research project. Further, using the interview data to conduct a post-colonial analysis exploring the learning advising experience as one of liminality, hybridity and becoming (Manathunga, 2006; Peseta, Manathunga, Barrie, & Sutherland, 2004) would also provide rich intellectual work. For this study, however, I have chosen to remain faithful to the conceptual and methodological techniques and tools of a Foucauldian historical ontology. It is my opinion that the erudition that this study entails lays the groundwork for perhaps more expansive ways of thinking ‘otherwise’ in learning advising. For this reason, I seek to revisit the interview data through these various ‘other’ lenses in my post-doctoral work.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the three dimensional analysis undertaken to make sense of the dispersion of truth in the field of learning advising. It has shown how the lens of governmentality is used to view the intelligibility of the learning advisor as a peripheral effect of the historical and political constitution of the higher education student as the object of government. It has shown how historical and genealogical strategies are deployed to demonstrate contingency and dispersion in the field by fragmenting the present. It has been shown how this is achieved practically through the delimitation of four ACTs across the two analysis chapters (Chapters Four and Five) inside each of which the specific intelligibility of the learning advisor is presented as an effect of the discursive formations that problematise and represent the higher education student. It has also been shown how the archaeological method is used in each ACT to trace the emergence and circulation of the specific historical discursive formation from the past to the present.
Chapter Four Introduction

Chapter Four outlines the conditions of emergence of ‘student learning assistance’ as a discrete field of practice in Australian higher education from the 1950s to the 1980s. It demonstrates how student learning assistance in the academy became intelligible as the management of individual and social difference became a governmental imperative, and that this imperative emerged out of the accidental intersection of historical circumstance, social and economic exigencies, and the moral and political reasoning of social liberalism.

In this chapter, it will be shown how, at this particular historical intersection, the perceived demands of advancing industrialised economies and the achievement of the ‘mundane objectives of the administrative state – social order, economic prosperity and social welfare’ (Hunter, 1996, p153) reconfigured the university as an important apparatus of security in western liberal democracies. Within this reconfigured university, academic and social wastage became problematised as a national disgrace and individual and social difference became constituted as the object of governmental intervention. This created a discursive space for scientific explanations of difference to emerge and a practical space for therapeutic and educational interventions to become intelligible as general insurance against academic and social wastage. Specifically, this chapter locates the emergence of learning advising as the agent of redemption for the socially disadvantaged in the early 1970s at a time when the discursive framing of ‘student learning problems’ was transformed from a psycho-social representation of difference requiring a therapeutic intervention to a socio-cultural one requiring an educational intervention.

This chapter bridges four major historical reforms of the Australian higher education sector: the massive expansion of higher education and greater financial provision from Government sources in the 1960s; the binary structure that would last until the 1980s; the Whitlam reforms of the early 1970s which would mark the peak and premise the demise of the welfare state in Australia; and the Dawkins’ reforms that would radically reform the university structurally and financially in the late 1980s. Throughout these reforms it will be shown that there was
both continuity and discontinuity, and importantly that the ruptures and displacements had specific implications for the emergence and intelligibility of the learning advisor. While social liberalism is given as the prevailing political rationality across this chapter, which extends from the 1950s to the 1980s, the displacement of its soft conservative form with its ‘hard’ welfarist form in the 1970s has particular implications for how we think about learning advising today. It is argued that this displacement within its broader historical, social and economic context created a shift in the way higher education was configured as a governmental apparatus, from ‘development panacea’ (ACT-I.i) to ‘social leveller’ (ACT-II.i). Consequently, this shift also produced a shift in the problematisation of student learning from academic wastage and the problem of failure (ACT-I.ii) to social wastage and the problem of participation (ACT-II.ii). I argue that within this shift, because the problem of difference continues to be pathologised, the moral agency of the learning advisor as ‘agent of redemption’ (Popkewitz, 1998) remains stable. It is merely the diagnosis of difference and therefore the proposed intervention that represents a rupture.

This rupture is represented in the two ACTs of this Chapter. ACT-I locates the early emergence of student learning assistance as a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty with the convergence of soft social liberal reasoning and the social and economic imperatives of post-war reconstruction in modern Australia. This convergence saw the university harnessed to the political economy in unprecedented ways. The annexing of the university to public policy for the reform of the population into a skilled workforce brought with it both massive expansion of the sector and an intolerance of academic wastage and student failure. Initially represented as a problem with selection and prediction, it was the failure of research efforts to develop precise mechanisms to exclude the ‘academic casualty’ that advanced research efforts into identifying the ‘student at risk’. Creating a discursive space for scientific interpretation of student failure to emerge, the dominance of ‘adaptationist’ and differential psychology and functional sociology produced a psycho-social diagnosis of difference as the object of intervention. Students’ family and school backgrounds were pathologised as the cause for maladjustment, a lack of motivation and preparation – a psychological subjectivity with social determinants (Rose, 1999). In this period, counselling units and other ‘non-academic’ helping services were established (Frederick, 1974) – as general insurance against failure – a therapeutic intervention to assist individuals and their families cope with personal problems and improve study habits.
ACT-II identifies the emergence of the learning advisor as an educational intervention for the socio-culturally disadvantaged. This ACT locates the rupture in the diagnosis of difference during the 1970s at the high water mark of hard social liberal reasoning and the convergence of several sustained social, political and economic crises. These crises included: the growing salience of conflict and reproduction theories for interpreting social inequality as a problem of disadvantage; a policy preoccupation with social wastage and the redistribution of opportunity; an economic crisis that exacerbated and highlighted existing racial and class tensions; and the rise of cultural pluralism as the new social order. It is here that the university is reconfigured from ‘development panacea’ to ‘social leveller’ as a university education became less an intellectual privilege, and more a social right for all under-represented groups.

The representation of student difference, thus, shifted from a pathology emanating from the student-family relationship to a cultural disadvantage emanating from the student-economy relationship (Arnot, 2002). The psycho-social representation of intellectual ability and maladjustment began to be displaced by the socio-cultural representation of disadvantage and ‘educational handicap’. The object of intervention became a social subjectivity with cultural determinants – the non-traditional and equity student. And while such a shift was arguably progressive, it simply served to relocate the pathology of difference from the home to the social group, from the maladjusted psychology of the individual to the material, cultural and linguistic handicap of social background.

This convergence saw the Commonwealth assume control of the higher education sector financially and symbolically. The abolition of fees in the early 1970s and the Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) in 1985 are evidence of government initiatives to neatly define those domains of difference that required State intervention in the name of social justice. By the 1990s and the publication of a Fair Chance for All, student differences were petrified into equity categories through which governments could regulate the conduct of universities. Defined as a problem of educational disadvantage, students were considered culturally and linguistically handicapped and in need of educational compensation. The psychologist and counsellors’ role in learning support became increasingly sidelined by the advent of remedial English language and literacy teachers and educational learning skills advisors. Slowly and unevenly educational practitioners came to replace the psychologists in attending to academic student learning issues: a redemptive, albeit educational, intervention for the ‘non-traditional student’ and ‘equity’ student.
ACT-I: A therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty

ACT-I Introduction

i The university as ‘development panacea’
ii Problematising academic wastage
iii Making sense of failure
iv Representing the academic casualty
v A therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty
vi Correspondence to the present

ACT-I Summary

ACT-I demonstrates how the establishment of counselling and guidance in universities as a therapeutic set of practices for the academic casualty can be seen as an effect of the power/knowledge relations in the academy, which themselves are located within a broader historical and political context. It covers the period from the 1940s to the late 1960s, where the agendas of a social liberal government, a policy preoccupation with academic wastage, and the dominance of differential psychology\(^{18}\) (Anastasi & Foley, 1949; Tyler, 1947) and functional sociology\(^{19}\) (Davis & Moore, 1945; Parsons, 1951) for making sense of difference converge with the social and political conditions of post-war reconstruction. For the higher education sector, this period is characterised by a major event that would change the relationship between the university and the government into the unseeable future: the harnessing of the university to the demands of government and the political economy. With the social liberal rhetoric of ‘equality of opportunity’, the dominant influence of Human Capital Theory and the increasing demand for skilled labour (Martin, et al., 1964), higher education in Australia was ‘democratised and technologised’, and student failure was transformed from a sign of academic standards to a sign of educational inefficiency.

\(^{18}\) Differential psychology is the study of the behavioural, cognitive and emotional differences between individual and groups. Its determinations are quantitative rather than qualitative.

\(^{19}\) Functional sociology examines how each aspect of of society is interdependent and contributes to society's functioning as a whole. Its emphasis is on how social cohesion is produced.
While differential psychology and functional sociology had quite firmly naturalised and justified inequality and segmentation in society, the social and political demand for higher education during post-war reconstruction threatened to disrupt the natural order. This period featured two major reforms: the post-war imperative of massive higher education expansion within the framework of a meritocratic version of ‘equality of opportunity’ including greater financial provision from Government sources, which came out of the Murray Committee (1957) recommendations; and the implementation of the binary structure of higher education, which came out of the Martin Committee (1964) recommendations, to restore a more ‘natural’ order in the face of growing social demand for higher education.

The focus on student failure and wastage within a meritocratic framework marks the emergence of the higher education student as a subject of government and an object of the dividing gaze.20 The intolerance of student failure led to a proliferation of research into the differences between individual student performance in order to more precisely identify and exclude the student at risk of failing. At this particular historical moment, student difference tended to be analysed and explained in terms of the psycho-social characteristics of the individual student and their family/school background. The student at risk of failing emerges as a psycho-social subjectivity with social determinants (Rose, 1999). Student failure, while also being attributed to the problems of university pedagogy, was largely attributed to the ‘handicapping’ influences of the students’ family and home background. Counselling and study skills emerge in this period as the two important mechanisms for socialising the maladjusted academic casualty.

i. The university as ‘development panacea’

This section provides one interpretation of the way that the social liberal policies of the 1950s and 60s, the imperatives of post-war reconstruction, and the advent of Human Capital Theory converge in historical circumstance to reconfigure the university as an apparatus of security

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20 The dividing gaze here refers to the objectification of the subject in scientific and political knowledge/power discourses. Dividing practices, as defined by Foucault, refer to those technologies of normalisation, individualisation and surveillance that divide the subject from himself (sic) or others on the basis of specified forms of difference (Foucault, 1982).
and constitute the higher education student as an important subject of government and object of the dividing gaze.

**Social liberalism**

It can be suggested that social liberalism, or welfarism, was the dominant form of government rationality from 1946 to 1974 (McMahon, 2000). As a form of governmental reason, social liberalism sees the State assume a pastoral role in managing the welfare of the population by providing a level of protection from the risks that the industrial market economy places on the individual, such as unemployment, poverty and inequality (Dean, 1999, p204). The welfare state is said to have emerged out of multiple crises leading up to the 1940s, including the great depressions of the 1890s and 1930s, and consisted of layered practices in the first half of the 20th century concerned with the protection of the wealth and prosperity of the national population (McMahon, 2000, p7). From an historical perspective, Barcan (1965) suggests that in 1941 ‘a spirit of social reform pervaded both the Labor Party and the community’ (p247) after the election of the Labor Party at the state and federal level after ten years in opposition. This ‘spirit of social reform’ may have been tempered by the conservative Menzies Liberal Government through the 1950s, but social liberalism and the commitment to full employment and workers’ rights, continued to prevail.

Social liberalism was underpinned by Keynesian economics, and has been referred to as the Keynesian welfare state (Peters, 2001). Unlike the classical liberal mode of government that it sought to replace, social liberalism recognised the role of government as interventionist: it was a form of government that sought to protect its citizens against the excesses of the market by providing a feedback loop between social and economic processes (Dean, 1999). Protection was understood as involving the socialisation or collectivisation of risk, which is partially achieved through the provision of social insurance. Social insurance manifests in the provision of benefits, services and social institutions concerned with managing the welfare of the population (Rose, 1999), such as public health and education. Underpinning this mode of government or political rationality, was the idiom of ‘equality of opportunity’ and an ethos of a just and prosperous society achieved through technical means. Within this mode of government, education would feature large as an important social apparatus for securing and improving the welfare of the population. While free state secondary education had been
available in fits and starts from the 1920s, it was in this era that it became free and accessible to meet the social demand created by what was regarded as an ‘increasingly industrialised and affluent society’ (Spaull, 1998, p7).

**Post-war reconstruction**

The transformation of higher education in this period, however, was not simply the product of a social liberal government and the growing social demand for a university education. The perceived political and economic imperatives of post-war reconstruction combined with the advent of Manpower Theory in the 1940s and Human Capital Theory in the 1950s turned higher education into what was subsequently and variously lamented as a ‘development panacea’ (Foster, 1978, p2), ‘the tertiary component of a rigidly articulated state educational machine…’ (Wheelwright, 1965, pxvii citing Encel 1965), a ‘service station’ for carrying out public policy (Partridge, 1963; Philip, 1970). While universities had enjoyed the attention and funding of governments during the war period where they had been transformed from teaching to research institutions (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Anderson & Eaton, 1982), the response to the post-war initiatives were less positive.

The post-war reconstruction era can be understood against the backdrop of the cold war: shifting international relations; the technologisation of industry; and intense competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for ‘economic, technological and military supremacy’ (Georgiadis, 2007). This was a period when a driving discourse about the shortage of qualified scientific and technical personnel came into its own. It is also a discourse, Godin (2002) suggests, that was the product of the fusion of political will and unreliable statistical calculations. Human history, as H.G. Wells suggests ‘was a race between education and catastrophe’ (Wells, 1920, Ch 41). This was an era that embodied a faith in the inherent rationality of science (Popkewitz, 1997), where the social sciences were compelled to become increasingly ‘scientific’ (Cowen, 1996a), and where the modern university became enframed by the rhetoric of democratisation and technologisation (Partridge, 1963). It is the era where, it has been argued, the instrumentalist role of the university began to take

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21 A thorough critique of this discourse, its early location with the OECD, and the faulty measurement techniques used to produce the shortage crisis can be found in the work of Godin (2002).
precedence over its espoused cultural role\textsuperscript{22} (Cowen, 1996a, 1996b; Readings, 1996; Wheelwright, 1965).

The instrumental role that higher education would be expected to play in the modernisation of society became an inevitable fact of western liberal democratic economies, many of which formed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1961.\textsuperscript{23} Although Australia would not be a member of the OECD until 1971, it was a faithful follower of political and economic developments in the US and the UK. The OECD would have a profound influence on the economic and social policy of liberal democracies worldwide. With its focus on promoting sustainable economic development, education featured heavily in its portfolio. The OECD proliferated the discourse on the shortage of scientific and technical personnel with its

\[ \text{...conviction that increased investment in the training of scientific and technical personnel, and in the basic general education on which such training must be built, is an essential ingredient of forward-looking policy to promote economic and social development, such development being intimately linked with the quality of manpower in the Member countries and with the technical sophistication of their methods of production. (OECD, 1968 in Godin, 2007, pp27-8)\textsuperscript{24}} \]

\textsuperscript{22} This is contentious given that Australian universities had long been critiqued as ‘predominantly technical colleges’ responsible in the main for ‘mere’ professional training (Partridge, 1963, p9). Conversely, the university would later be critiqued for its role in cultural reproduction rather than merely cultural transmission.

\textsuperscript{23} Pursuant to Article 1 of the Convention signed in Paris on 14\textsuperscript{th} December, 1960, and which came into force on 30\textsuperscript{th} September, 1961, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shall promote policies designed:

- to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in Member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus contribute to the development of the world economy;
- to contribute to sound economic expansion in Member as well as non-member countries in the process of economic development; and
- to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multi-lateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations.

The signatories to the Convention on the OECD are Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxemborg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. The following countries acceded subsequently to this Convention:... Japan (28\textsuperscript{th} April, 1964), Finland (28\textsuperscript{th} January, 1969), Australia (7\textsuperscript{th} June, 1971) and New Zealand (29\textsuperscript{th} May, 1973).

\textsuperscript{24} OECD (1968), Review of the Work of the Organization in the Field of Scientific and Technical Personnel, C (68) 68, p1 cited in Godin 2002, p28
Encouraged by the logic of Human Capital Theory, which proposed a direct link between ‘increased investment in formal education and higher productivity and macro-economic growth’ (Livingstone, 1997, p9), it is argued that the OECD naturalised the discourse of the economics of education (Davies, Gottsche, & Bansell, 2006) and installed a ‘scientific’ comparative approach to educational planning (Cowen, 1996a; Wheelwright, 1965).

Human Capital Theory (HCT) stressed the technical function of formal education as the maximisation of human resources (Georgiadis, 2007). This theory emerged from the Chicago school group of neo-classical economists, who were also addressing the OECD and UNESCO conferences, which Marginson (1995) suggests is ‘a spectacular example of the power/knowledge fusion’ (p4). In 1961, the OECD held its first Conference on Economic Growth and Investment in Education, which promoted educational expansion as an essential pre-requisite for economic growth (Lennep, 1970, p22). The link between education and economic growth was so strong an assumption that the only debates featured in the conference were whether expansion should be fast or slow, and planning driven by Manpower or social demand approaches (Frankel & Halsey, 1970). It was at this conference that the OECD ‘consecrated the virtuous circle that education is an investment that promotes economic growth, which in turn makes it possible for governments to respond to the rising social demand for education’ (OECD, 1985, p9).

Crossley and Watson (2003, p52) argue that the ‘interpretive, cultural and critical perspectives [on the purpose of education] were ignored or marginalised by the increasingly dominant positivistic social science paradigm and the rationalist modernisation theory that underpin[ed] it’. And one suspects that the ‘fast’ (if not haphazard) ‘Manpower approach’ to planning prevailed: the key advisory body for educational planning was called the ‘OECD Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel’, and the educational expansion that resulted would later be referred to as ‘the runaway process of educational growth’ (Gass, 1970, p31), only ‘partly the consequence of deliberate policies’ (Lennep, 1970, p23).

Needless to say, Human Capital Theory was quickly ‘incorporated into the great programs of educational expansion in the 1960s in the OECD countries, including Australia’ (Marginson, 1995, p2). So thoroughly was this doctrine taken up that a cursory glance at the activities of OECD members in this period will reveal the same pattern: massive expansion of education in conjunction with increased government spending (Georgiadis, 2007). For the higher education
sector in Australia, between 1953 and 1957 a small expansion of 26% in first year enrolment numbers had occurred from 28,792 to 36,465 (Murray, 1957, p29). In the seven years to 1964, this number doubled to 76,188 (Harman, 1980; Schonell, Roe, & Meddleton, 1962), and in the six years to 1970, it almost doubled again to 115,630 (Harman, 1980). In just 13 years between 1957 and 1970, the Australian university student population grew by almost 335%.

But human capital in the guise of skills formation was just the half of it. The socialising function of higher education would also be an important factor for economic growth. Based on psychological assumptions about the ‘modernity syndrome’, formal education was considered an instrument of ‘attitudinal socialisation’ of individuals, not only inculcating the qualities and virtues required for a prosperous society, but potentially able to break an individual’s ties with family tradition (read social status). Foster (1978, p5) suggests that economic development was perceived as requiring ‘a greater concentration of individuals characterised by an orientation to the future; a belief in the possibility and the desirability of change; a propensity for innovation and experiment and a correspondingly low level of belief in fate and a de-emphasis upon traditional kinship ties’. A formal education could produce those ‘constellations of attitudes that could be considered as almost a constituting pre-requisite for development’ (Foster, 1978, p5).

The social and economic role that universities had assumed in this period was underlined by the message delivered by the Australian Prime Minister in the preface to the first edition of The Australian University in 1963:

> University education is a matter of great national importance. There can be no richer investment than the intellectual and social development of our future citizens. …It is one of the remarkable features of our post-war experience in Australia that the demand for higher education has grown apace…The development of Australia and the discharge of our increasing world responsibilities will require a greater supply of highly qualified people’.
> (Message from the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, Australian University, 1963 vol.1, no.1, p5)

Although at this stage higher education was still largely in the hands of the States, by the 1950s, the funding and policy initiatives came largely from the federal level (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003, p2). With the University now ‘calling the tune’ (Philip, 1970) to the Government’s agenda of post-war reconstruction combined with the demand for skilled professionals to lead the changing nation, the efficiency of the university in providing society
with the workforce it required had become a national priority. It is in this context that the
performance of the student of higher education became an important object of government,
and student failure was transformed from a sign of academic standards into a sign of
organisational inefficiency.

ii. Problematising academic wastage

In the previous section, the convergence of social liberalism, the perceived imperatives of
post-war reconstruction, and the advent of human capital theory were shown to transform the
university into an important and expanding apparatus of government creating a skilled
workforce for an industrialising nation. This section illustrates how within this context,
student failure and academic wastage became problematised as a national crisis that created a
discursive space for ‘scientific’ explanations of the difference in student performance to
emerge. This section demonstrates how this discursive research space became occupied by the
emerging social sciences of differential psychology and functional sociology, which produced
a proliferation of explanations for student difference, only some of which took hold at the
policy level.

As stated above, with the convergence of the conservative liberal idiom of ‘equality of
opportunity’, the deliberate expansion of the university student population, and the efficiency
of the university in the spotlight, student failure and wastage became problematised as an
indicator of public and educational inefficiency and a risk to the economic prosperity of the
country. ‘Failure’ and ‘wastage’ are key economic terms that require some unpacking. Failure
refers to those students who do not complete their studies in the minimum time or at all.
Educational or academic wastage has two dimensions: the first is the notion of talent wastage,
such as the ‘leakage’ of bright students from secondary schools who never attend the
university (Schonell, 1963); and secondly, there is the public cost of the ‘academic casualty’ –
the academic failure, the repeating student or the drop-out (Bertstecher, 1970). A UNESCO
paper (Bertstecher, 1970), entitled ‘Costing educational wastage: a pilot simulation study’,
developed what its author regarded as ‘a precise index for the measurement of educational
wastage’ (p8). This paper provided a complex economic equation based on a series of inputs
and outputs for determining the economic cost of student wastage in education. According to
the equation, ‘...educational wastage will be nil if the number of pupil years spent by repeaters and drop-outs is zero. …’ (p9)

What is useful about examining this economic perspective on student failure and wastage is that although it recognises the various perspectives on the purpose of education, which it identifies as pedagogical, sociological, legal and administrative (p6), it foregrounds institutional and economic efficiency as the primary goal of education. Thus, in the equation of the economic cost of education, the ‘successful graduate [is regarded] as one, and drop-outs as less than one, the fraction getting smaller the earlier the drop out occurs’ (p7). Through this lens, the academic casualty embodies economic liability which, if identified and eliminated early enough, would represent a smaller fraction of wastage or drag on resources. According to Berstecher (1970), it was precisely this ‘under-efficiency’ (p5) of the educational system that ‘current educational research’ (p5) had to attend to if the most appropriate ‘anti-wastage strategies’ (p6) were to be designed and implemented.

This single problematisation would throw open an entirely new discursive space for the examination of student performance and the problem of the included/excluded. Through the lens of governmentality, it would also produce a proliferation of subjects and proposed interventions for students whose participation or progress was considered ‘abnormal’.

The problem of student failure was very much a post-war phenomenon. In 1954, the Vice Chancellor of the University of New England, Dr R.B. Madgwick suggested

"There is no justification any longer for any failure to recognise our responsibilities to our students. In the 19th C or even in the first two decades of the 20th C we could stand by happily while students wasted their time and say with some reason that this was their responsibility. We can do this no longer. These people are sent to us by the community; they are paid for by the community; they are expected in the long run to lead the community; and the community will no longer tolerate an attitude in the universities which says that the responsibility for being trained rests with the students.  

Although Madgwick’s statement did not represent a consensus view among the university administrators present at the 1954 Convention (Barcan, 1965), it did appear to represent the pending reality that universities were facing: student success would now be a university responsibility. By the time of the publication of the Murray Report in 1957, universities were
compelled to ‘harness brain power for the national good’ (p8), to include ‘all those qualified and who wish to enter, and to give them the teaching and the facilities which will ensure each of them a reasonable opportunity to pass from first to second year and on to graduation’ (p32). In 1943, despite the ‘anti-wastage’ strategy of raising the selection criteria, universities still had a 39% failure rate. In 1951, only 61% of students completed first year, only 35% graduated in minimum time, and only 58% were expected to graduate at all (Murray, et al., 1957, p35). The Murray Committee reported this failure rate as ‘a national extravagance which can be ill afforded’,

It gravely reduces the efficiency of the universities by causing many students to take a year or more longer than they should over their courses, thereby swelling the classes and getting in the way of the proper education of other students; it also seriously diminishes the national resources of trained university graduates by causing a loss of at least one year's service in the working lives of a very large number. (Murray, et al., 1957, p35)

In March 1961, the University administration journal, Vestes (1961, p5) promoted the first Conference of Australian Universities to be held at the University of Sydney in August that year: its theme, ‘The general efficiency of Australian universities in the face of rising student numbers’. In the same issue, Phillip Hughes published a short literature review entitled ‘The incidence and causes of student failure’ (pp30-33) which covered the research in the area to date. In his article, Hughes (1961) lamented ‘It is unfortunate that the failure rate in Australian universities has so often been seized on as a weapon to belabour adversaries or to achieve certain ends. The findings of past and present research, and the need for future research can thus be ignored, but only at a cost to both the university and the community’ (p30). Hughes’ point is pertinent here. While the Government considered the elimination of failure as a national priority, university staff saw it as a political weapon and a threat to their autonomy. Among some academics at least, the problem of failure would be regarded as far more a political issue than an academic one.

It is important to remember that the intolerance of student failure was a relatively new phenomenon for universities. Traditionally student failure and wastage had been an indicator of academic standards, an unpolicitalised part of the ‘natural’ order. Throwing some light on this, the former VC of UNSW, Sir Philip Baxter, in his article ‘Academic Wastage’, reminded the reader of the old University of Sydney song, ‘50% must fail’, and indicated that most of
the older generation of teaching staff had been indoctrinated into such a belief. Baxter (1970) suggested

…there is a somewhat similar attitude behind our university community’s reaction to the slaughter and suffering which we inflict annually upon the new students who come to Australian universities. Somehow we have come to regard it as something which always happens, something which is natural. Some of our academic colleagues are almost opposed to trying to do anything about it. (p152)

As a problem of government, student failure and wastage would continue to plague the legitimacy of the university well into the 1980s (Marginson, 2004). Scientific studies into the causes of failure and wastage were prolific as they attempted to explain whether the ‘educational mortality’ of students was the product of ‘institutional murder, group suicide or natural death’ (Baxter, 1970, p157).

It is in this era that the higher education student and student failure came under the gaze of the government and its attendant intellectual technologies in the human sciences: demographics, educational economics, psychology and sociology. With a focus on the ‘problem’ of student failure and wastage and in accordance with the norms of ‘success’ and ‘normal progress’, a massive labour was undertaken to assemble the necessary ‘truths’ about student performance that could inform governmental programmes of reform and anti-wastage strategies. Such a project required the production and representation of subjectivities for the higher education student as an object of government intervention; it required a way of making sense of individual performance.

iii. Making sense of failure

ACT-I so far has shown how the convergence of historical circumstance and political reasoning produced the public university as an important social and economic driver. Within this context, student failure and wastage became problematised in political and economic terms as a threat to national prosperity and a drain on the public purse. In this section, it is shown how this problematisation opened a discursive space in educational research for making sense of individual performance, and in particular, student failure. In this discursive space, differential psychology and functional sociology can be seen to compete and compromise to produce specific notions of the student whose progress was judged in
economic terms and diagnosed as a psycho-social condition warranting therapeutic intervention.

Analysing the historical archive, it is possible to see the way that the problematisation of student failure brought higher education pedagogy and teacher professionalism under greater scrutiny. The general lack of resources and the reliability of examinations were questioned by Murray, et al. (1957) and others (Baxter, 1970; Martin, et al., 1964; Meddleton, 1965; Sanders, 1963). The impersonal nature of large classes (Murray, et al., 1957; Martin, et al., 1964; Schonell, 1962; Meddleton, 1965), the lack of small class teaching (Martin et al. 1964), and the indifference of teachers to student needs were receiving complaint (Hughes, 1961). Within administrative circles, the need to improve the pedagogical conditions of the university was becoming increasingly recognised (Hughes, 1961). However, changes to pedagogy and teaching were seen to involve a slow process, and as Anderson and Eaton (1982, p7) suggest ‘perhaps it was easier or less threatening to set up agencies to help students than it was to establish centres which might ask questions about their teachers’. It is no surprise then that from the 1950s, the problem of failure was largely represented as a problem with the student. There was, after all, a ‘natural’ order that needed to be maintained. The prevailing attitude was that “it [was] no part of the function of a university to spoon-feed its students or to act as a forcing house for intellectual weaklings” (Sir John Mountford cited in Schonell, 1963b, p64). Academia itself was, at least at this stage, beyond rebuke.

**Making sense of difference**

Accordingly, making sense of failure at this time became an educational research agenda concerned with the making sense of the differences in individual student performance. Reflecting the ‘natural order’ of the time so thoroughly established through the work of differential psychology (Anastasi & Foley, 1949; Tyler, 1947) and functionalist sociology (Davis & Moore, 1949; Parsons, 1951), and entrenched in the industrialised division of labour, the problem of ‘innate ability’ tended to receive most of the initial attention. Implicit in this, was the intuitive correlation between innate ability and social status.

As stated earlier, the rhetoric of ‘equality of opportunity’ in this period was far more a case of equality of opportunity for those ‘who made the grade’ (Partridge, 1963) – a meritocracy.
This view had become influential from the intelligence tests of the 1920s and 30s that had demonstrated statistically that intellectual ability was (un)evenly distributed across the population - in the general shape of a norm curve (Tyler, 1947). Accordingly, the perception was that the university should only include the best and brightest, which the intelligence tests had confirmed would only constitute 10% of those eligible by age (Wheelwright, 1965). One of the more prominent public voices of this time, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Sir Fred Schonell (Schonell, 1963a), suggested that only 25% of ‘our young people are capable and should receive higher education’ (p45), and this should not necessarily be a university education. Students who were not capable ought not to apply.

In this context, differential psychology had already begun to carve out a research space for itself in the academy. During the Second World War, modern psychology had established itself as the scientific study of individual differences concerned with explaining the causes and consequences of variation in human capacities and attributes (Rose, 1985). The scientific explanation of human differences was extended by the emerging targets of personality and aptitude and techniques such as factor analysis and correlation coefficients. Through the development of increasingly complicated statistical techniques for the measurement, evaluation and prognosis of individual difference, this field established itself in the social apparatuses governing conduct to gather ‘the facts of individual difference’ (the intellectual and non-intellectual factors influencing performance) for education and industry (Tyler, 1947, p3). Conducting large numbers of studies of variability among animal performances of various problem-solving activities, with few human studies, these psychologists were able to conclude that the variation in the mental characteristics among individuals was not only a ‘universal phenomenon’, but that they were also ‘ineradicable’: ‘We must learn to understand them, accept them, and use them in the building of our common society’ (Tyler, 1947, p19). The common order was that everyone was different and largely unequal.

Likewise, the structural-functional sociological paradigm, which dominated the inquiry of social scientists in this period, naturalised the segmentation of society and the economy as the means through which ‘consensual social order’ was achieved (Davis & Moore, 1945; Durkheim, 1984, 1893; Parsons, 1951). By viewing society as a complex living system, these theorists assumed that societies have ‘certain functional prerequisites which must be met if it is to survive’ (Haralambos & Holborn, 1990, p28). This perspective saw stability and order deriving from the very existence of cooperative inequality or consensual stratification which
was justified through: i) the differences in ability, motivation and application of the population; and ii) a shared value system that recognised wealth and status as a derivative of ability and hard work (Haralambos & Holborn, 1980). Research from this perspective was concerned with identifying those assumed functional pre-requisites and explaining how ‘social equilibrium’ was maintained and reproduced25 (Emirbayer & Cohen, 2003; Livingstone, 1983). This research emphasised a common orientation towards society, a shared value system that members would willingly ‘conform, adapt, or adjust to’ (Livingstone, 1983, p15). From this perspective, social systems or institutions, such as education, were explained and justified as being necessary for sorting, selecting and training individuals for their appropriate roles in society (Hurn, 1978 in Livingstone, 1983). Educational systems were required to socialise the population through cultural transmission and facilitate adjustment to the natural order of things.

Accordingly, this ‘natural order’ of society was reflected in the division and demand for skilled labour in an increasingly industrialised and technologised labour market; that is, in a stratified form, the skilled labour market was said to require: technologists [university-educated professionals], technicians [technical college-educated] and craftsmen [the dexterous!] (Murray, et al., 1957; Martin, et al., 1964). This was reinforced by the notion that intelligence and aptitude were (not) evenly distributed, and further explained by a correlation between social status and intelligence (Tyler, 1947, p134). Finding a direct link between occupation and intelligence, differential psychology proved a convenient guide for ordering the roles of responsibilities of individuals in society: the stratification of the labour force could be seen as a neat representation of ability preferably sorted by the education system.

The ‘natural’ order, however, was coming under increasing pressure. The demographic phenomenon of the ‘bulge’26 in the population and the ‘trend’27 of an increasingly affluent population demanding access to higher education had become a feature of post-war Australia.

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25 ‘In consensual approaches, individuals are regarded as generally sharing common value orientations toward their society...all members of society are expected to conform, adapt, or adjust to these legitimate social requirements’ (Livingstone, 1983, p15)
26 Bulge – the bulge in the younger sector of society from the baby boomers and immigration (Jackson, 1999; Partridge, 1963)
27 Trend – the trend evident in affluent societies for a rising proportion of the relevant age group to seek entry to universities (Partridge, 1963)
(Partridge, 1963). Combined with ‘qualification inflation’ (Davis 1978, p152), and the growing number of students completing secondary education and qualifying for a university education, universities lamented the onset of students ‘deficient in ability’ who saw a university education as the key to economic and social mobility (Meddleton, 1965). Valuing a university education, it seems, was never intended to be shared equally. The ‘shared value system’ was threatening to eat itself as the ‘aspirational classes’ were seen to be demanding a level of education beyond their capabilities.

**A tale of two aptitudes**

From a governmental perspective, the social phenomena of the ‘bulge’ and the ‘trend’ were seen to create new exigencies for managing the population. Observing the growing demand for university study, in 1963 the Australian Universities Commission convened the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia, also known as the Martin Committee, to investigate the full breadth of issues and make specific recommendations for the future of higher education. The Committee’s final report (Martin, et al., 1964) attempted to curb the growth of interest in university education by splitting the educable population into two convenient aptitudes: the practical and the analytical.

The Martin Committee report was the catalyst for the establishment and maintenance of a binary system of higher education in Australia for the next two decades. Concerned with the unnatural amount of interest in a university education, the report suggested

> 6.20 In particular, there is a danger of higher education becoming identified in the minds of the community with university education, and of a university degree becoming the single symbol of intellectual aptitude. Ability is a complex human quality; and emphasis on university studies to the exclusion of others in higher education is wasteful of much human talent. (Martin, et al., 1964, p175)

From a social perspective, the universities’ dis-ease with the expansion of education and student failure is likely to have reflected a general concern for the threat this posed to the natural order of things, and particularly, the role that the university might be called on to play in maintaining that order.
Of specific interest in the voices of this era are those that make the connection between innate ability and social class explicit in their assumptions about how the student population was affecting the role and function of higher education. The ‘rise to power of the poorer classes’ (Madgwick, 1954 in Barcan, 1965), the enrolment of ‘intellectual weaklings’ and their ‘vocational’ rather than cultural aspirations (Meddleton, 1965; Schonell, 1963) were seen to be threatening to turn the university into a vocational training ground for the ‘poorer classes’. Returning to Dr R.B. Madgwick: speaking at the ‘Convention on the present pattern and future trends’ of universities in New South Wales in September 1954, he said

The political and social revolution which has swept away the old 19th Century social and economic system has inevitably reacted on the universities…Our population is not now drawn from any special group. University education is no longer the prerogative of the privileged classes and we are therefore faced with the problem of considering our objectives in relation to the 20th C phenomena - phenomena which have emerged to a very large extent as a result of the rise to power of the poorer classes and the appearance of the welfare state.

Basically, I admit, the objectives remain essentially the same, but they must be pursued in very different circumstances. …With our new population university education must be vocational; and with our new environment it must be very largely technological; and with the reliance of universities on public funds it must consider realistically the demands which the community makes upon it. (Madgwick, 1954 cited in Barcan, 1965)

The aspirational classes were problematised as gaining access without necessarily having the requisite abilities, and indeed were taking the place of those who did. In a study of the socio-psychological factors impacting on student failure rates, Schonell (1963) suggested

The first and perhaps most important of these factors … is the increasing emphasis being placed by the community on obtaining a university qualification. While this factor is per se related to adaptation through the pressure to succeed, it is also heightened in its effect by the consequent enrolment of students deficient in the requisite abilities. This does not mean that there is a fixed pool of ability and that we are overdrawing on that pool; in point of fact there is a considerable leakage of high ability talent that does not come to university. (p65)

This point is picked up in the Martin Committee report, which suggested that the ‘academic casualty’ was simply a product of expansion, a ‘tail-ender’ who was something of a nuisance to the efficiency of the university:
3.97 …These larger number of less-qualified students – still worthy of some kind of tertiary education – are tending to restrict the effectiveness of education that can be given to first year students as a whole. By their failures and repetition of courses, they are increasing the difficulties occasioned by the already over-burdened resources at first year level – laboratory space, basic equipment, essential reference textbooks, tutorial facilities and even accommodation for study and discussions. (Martin, et al., 1964, p62)

In order to stream the growing demand for higher education, the Martin Committee recommended a pattern of higher education more able to accommodate differences in students’ innate abilities:

6.21 A pattern of higher education, to be acceptable, should fit young people for a full adult life in contemporary society, limited only by their innate abilities. (Martin, et al., 1964, p175)

The subsequent establishment of the binary system was a precise and effective mechanism for absorbing expansion without threatening the exclusivity of the university. Splitting the population into two aptitudes, and harking back to differential psychology’s analysis of innate ability and functional sociology’s analysis of occupational trajectory, the Martin Committee suggested that the Colleges of Advanced Education would be for the ‘practical minded’ - ‘equal but different’ (Phillips, 1970) - while the universities would educate the more ‘analytical students’:

The difference between the work at the two types of institution lies in the greater emphasis on the practical and applied aspects of the subjects at the technical college as opposed to the more general and analytical treatment developed at the university.

The objective of the education provided by a technical college is to equip men and women for the practical world of industry and commerce, teaching them the way in which manufacturing and business are carried on and the fundamental rules which govern their successful operation. The university course, on the other hand, tends to emphasise development of knowledge and the importance of research; in doing so it imparts much information which is valuable to the practical man but which is often incidental to the main objective. Both types of education are required by the university, and in increasing amounts, but it is important that students receive the kind of education best suited to their innate abilities and purposes in life. At present, certain pressures tend to overtax the academic ability of a considerable segment of the student
population which could be better provided for in institutions offering courses of different orientation and less exacting academically. (Martin, et al., 1965, p165)

However, even the implementation of the binary system did not bring the high failure rates to an end, and the proliferation of research in this area continued in its intensity.

_Making sense of the academic casualty_

Despite the introduction of the binary system, failure rates in universities remained steady. Research up to and beyond this time had been concerned with improved methods of selection and prediction, a problem of who could be rightfully excluded and/or appropriately streamed into a College of Advanced Education (see Anderson & Eaton, 1980). However, a student’s matriculation score – which had come to represent their level of intelligence (Miller & Davey, 1988) - was found to be a relatively unreliable indicator. Despite the many and varied efforts of the social sciences to narrow the causes of failure, it became apparent that no one cause could be found (eg. Anderson, 1961; Hughes, 1961; Miller, 1970; Murray, et al., 1957; Sanders, 1963; Schonell, Roe, et al., 1962). This proved ominous for universities whose efficiency was seen to hang on improved methods for excluding those at risk of failing. Predictability was tenuous, but the findings were generally confirming. It was clear that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were less likely to graduate, but in a liberal society emphasising ‘equality of opportunity’, this would not be a politically legitimate cause for exclusion (Anderson & Eaton 1980). Without legitimate means of excluding the academic casualty, and under pressure to ensure student success, universities turned to the social sciences for solutions. The resulting psycho-social representation of the academic casualty allowed greater definition of the problem of student ‘backgrounds’ as the domain to be governed.

From a sociological perspective, the notion of background was and is vital to research concerned with making sense of difference. Prior to this period, universities collected data on student ‘backgrounds’ according to their father’s occupation and the type of school they attended (Anderson & Eaton, 1982); however, from the 1960s a proliferation of variables of student background would emerge from the human sciences to construct various pictures of
the failing student. Comber (1997) suggests that the word ‘background’, which first appeared on the ERIC Digest in 1966, ‘is part of educational and sociological research discourses which define what counts as significant in knowing the student subject and in interpreting research findings…’ (p1). Comber goes on to suggest that the word ‘unleashes powerful and at times negative effects in educational sites and that it is increasingly problematic in terms of what it implies about students' (and teachers') lifeworlds and subjectivities’ (p1). Accordingly, the term ‘background’ should not be regarded as a neutral term or empty signifier: rather it should be treated with suspicion and used with a critical awareness of the harm it could unleash on the student as subject.

iv. Representing the academic casualty: foregrounding background

Although intelligence and student laziness had been considered the most likely candidates for student failure, it was the students’ school and family background combined with individual personality traits that would come to represent the academic casualty as a psycho-social subjectivity requiring intervention (Hughes, 1961; Vaizey, 1962). In one sense, this representation could be seen as a compromise between the educational sociologists, economists and psychologists who brought their varied perspectives to the ‘problem’ of student difference.

An excellent illustration of the debate around this time can be found in The Gulbenkian Educational Discussion in the United Kingdom, whose proceedings are published in Universities Quarterly (1962). The theme of this particular discussion was ‘Research into Higher Education’ where the opening address ‘A time and a mood for research’ by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds discussed the emerging field of ‘research into higher education’ – a fairly novel and apparently much resisted idea at the time. Invited to speak at

28 ‘The Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors (Thesaurus) is a controlled vocabulary - a carefully selected list of education-related words and phrases assigned to ERIC records to organize them by subject and make them easier to retrieve through a search. Searching by Descriptors involves selecting relevant terms from this controlled vocabulary to locate information on your topic’ (ERIC 2010). The Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) is one of the largest international databases of educational research and resources. Although possibly not intended this way, a researcher can trace the entrance and transformation of specific educational concepts into the ‘controlled vocabulary’ of educational research and thought within the Thesaurus of the ERIC Digest.
this Discussion were a range of prominent people in higher education in the UK, including the growing body of educational researchers from the University of Oxford: the sociologists, Floud and Halsey; the economist, Vaizey, and the psychologist, Furneaux. During Vaizey’s presentation ‘How much and how many?’, where he discussed the need for educational planning to be driven by the demand for higher education and the changing occupational structure, a debate ensued over access and opportunity. The psychologist Furneaux insisted that a university education should be limited to the those of a certain ability, arguing that educational attainment was strongly correlated to individual differences in intelligence (IQ) and personality (eg. neuroticism/stability, introvert/extrovert, high/low drive). Indeed, he went as far as to argue that intelligence was 80 percent genetic in origin and 20 percent environmental’ (Vaizey, 1962, p119). It was clear in this debate, however, that Furneaux’s was regarded as an out-dated view. The educational economist, Vaizey, and the sociologists, Floud and Halsey, argued that intelligence as measured by IQ tests was more a reflection of the educational and social distribution of opportunity than of innate ability (Vaizey, 1962). Vaizey, in particular, made the distinction between ‘IQ people’ and ‘able people’ suggesting that academic ability required more than intelligence as measured by an IQ test: academic ability could be determined through a student’s background, motivation and training (Vaizey, 1962, p117). It is through a combination of these diagnoses that social background would come to the fore in explaining the academic casualty as a psycho-social subjectivity requiring therapeutic intervention.

For the university student, the problem of ‘background’ was diagnosed as a problem with the length, quality and type of schooling combined with the potentially handicapping features of the student’s family/home background. Although the university was seen to provide its own handicapping features through unreliable examinations, large classes and poor study conditions, the problem with student learning was framed in terms of ‘adjustment’ to the academic environment, and was therefore seen as an individual problem: of preparation, motivation, personal strength and study habits.

In addition to the perceived problem of innate ability, students entering from secondary school were considered to have only a vague idea of what was required from them at university (Meddleton, 1965). This lack of preparation, also regarded as ineffective study methods, was considered one of the major causes of the academic casualty. This lack of preparation for academic study was regarded as a behavioural problem stemming from the
inadequate length and quality of the secondary school. The Murray Committee, for example, suggested that

Partly because of the shortness of secondary school and partly because of the alleged deficiency in general intellectual training, the universities consider that the first year student is not mature enough to benefit properly from university work. (Murray, et al., 1957, p31)

Maturity may well have been an important factor given that approximately half the university student population around this time were 16 or 17 years of age (Barcan, 1965, p266), and attempts were made to address the ‘shortness’ of secondary school. However, it was the issue of pedagogy (Hughes, 1961) which caught the interest of educational researchers. This was taken up in the Martin Committee Report, where it was suggested that

Students need opportunities in their secondary course to develop effective methods of note-taking and note-making and, at times, to be left to themselves to select, organise and apply information from textbooks and reference books, for this is what they will have to do at the university. Undue coaching, drilling, spoon-feeding and cramming are a poor preparation for the freer, more challenging, less ordered atmosphere of first year classes. Unless students independently, or as a result of guidance, develop effective habits of study, they will certainly be at a disadvantage in the university. (Martin, et al., 1964, pp61-2)

While the pedagogical diagnosis was compelling, in time it had to be dispelled. Despite the hopes of those professors who designed the modern syllabus implemented in secondary education by the Wyndham Scheme in 1957, by 1968 it had clearly made no significant difference to higher education student performance (Baxter, 1970).

Other evidence suggested that it was not the curriculum but the type of school attended which proved significant to students’ academic performance, and that this was not simply because of its quality or pedagogy *per se*, but because students from different backgrounds had a tendency to patronise different types of school (Anderson, 1961). This sharpened the focus on a student’s home and family background.
**Family/home background and the ‘built-in’ handicap**

With students’ matriculation scores and the ‘quality’ of school in general proscribed as a reasonable predictor of student success and failure, the social sciences found a niche for making sense of the difference of student performance in terms of their non-intellectual correlates: family/home background and its influence on study habits, motivation and personal strength. In listing the ways that student performance could be associated with the family, Anderson (1961) suggested

> Students who are from sheltered or puritanical backgrounds provide another way that student performance can be associated with the family. Such students, if they have not rebelled against family authority and established their own independence, are more likely than others to become casualties in the give and take of undergraduate life. (p45)

In an industrialised economy, the working class have been conveniently and historically pathologised as deficient in ability, intelligence, motivation and work ethic and criticised for depriving their children (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965; Haralambos & Holborn, 1990; Knittel & Hill, 1973; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Preston, 2007; Skeggs, 1997, 2004; Walkerdine, 1991, 2003). The home of the working class has long been considered a ‘dangerous’ element that required some kind of government intervention if a civilised society is to be maintained; indeed, the advent of mass primary education was a prime example of governmental social and moral training for maintaining order (see Dean, 1991; Hunter, 1994; Rose, 1990). Take, for example, Adam Smith’s (1937) suggestion in the *Wealth of Nations*, that the State should take a role in educating these ‘inferior ranks of the people’ to reverse the ‘deforming’ effects that unskilled labour has on the individual (p740 in Petrella, 1970, p156). Smith claimed that with the division of labour, the unskilled, tedious and simple work performed by a large proportion of the population would make them ‘as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become’ (Smith, 1937, pp734-5 in Petrella, 1970, p156). Dean’s (1991) work on the constitution of poverty from the 18th Century provides a thorough analysis of the indelible link between pauperism and political economy.

Further, intelligence testing effectively problematised the home environment by locating the early years of childhood as the most significant for intellectual growth. Through this lens, it was suggested that the home environment could foster or retard intellectual growth of the
individual through its emotional climate, its intellectual stimulation, and opportunities for practicing such things as reasoning and problem-solving (Bayley, 1957; Bloom, et al., 1965). With the ignorance of the working class family and the deprivation of their home established, they were understood as causing retardation in their children’s intellectual growth. The home of the unskilled worker was correlated to poverty, inadequate general knowledge, low social class and backwardness in school (Burt, 1937 in Miller, 1971, p13). It is not surprising, therefore, that the Martin Committee recommended the education of families about the demands of university study. It was believed that this kind of education could help them to make ‘more appropriate’ choices for their children.

What is important here is that as part of the natural order, a person’s ability was correlated to their social background, and social background explained by the father’s occupation - his labour. At the higher education level, studies in the 1960s found positive correlations between student performance and the family background of the student: the status of the father’s occupation; size of family income; prior family connection with university; and degree of family support for university study (Anderson & Priestley, 1959 in Hughes, 1961). Overall, it was concluded that students who had a prior association with the university and more books in the home fared better than others (Anderson & Priestley, 1960 in Hughes, 1961). Butterfield (1970) cited several studies at the school level that showed that students from ‘disadvantaged homes and depressed neighbourhoods [were] behind their compeers at the time of school entry’ (p169). Within the realm of educational research, this ‘condition’ became classified as ‘progressive retardation’ (ERIC Digest 1966-1980), ‘educational disadvantagement’ (ERIC Digest 1966-1980) and ‘cumulative disadvantage’ (Butterfield, 1970). ‘Backwardness’ was understood as an innate trait of the poor: a psychological subjectivity with social determinants.

In the higher education context, Anderson (1961) cross-correlated the ‘built-in’ differences arising from students’ backgrounds with the non-pedagogical differences in school practices and selective factors operating within the university. He suggested

…moves to increase educational efficiency in first year will need to take account of the handicapping conditions within the university, and develop appropriate forms of education for students who come with a ‘built-in’ handicap. (Anderson, 1961, p46)
For the student, the family and home background (conversation, material and physical resources), their social status and, therefore, the type of school they attended, were seen as the key contributors to a student’s ability to cope effectively with academic study.

Hughes’ (1961) review of failure in universities led him to suggest that as one could not rely on the secondary school or the home, it was the university’s responsibility to teach such things as study habits:

> It would seem that the university is depending on the home for the formation of habits and methods of thought suited to the university situation. Clearly it is the task of the university to take responsibility for the development of techniques and attitudes traditionally associated with university scholarship. In a period when the home and the school cannot do this, the university must assume a role. (Hughes, 1961, p33)

Schonell (1963), whose disciplinary work revolved around the needs of the ‘slow learner’ and their successful integration into mainstream classes through the use of diagnostic and remedial procedures, directly promoted the need for departments to assist those students whose backgrounds and personal qualities had led to an inferior level of understanding and study habits,

> … a couple of diagnostic test sessions to uncover to the student the worst of his deficiencies in knowledge of principles or basic theories of grammar…[which] might also be followed by a few 'bridge' sessions conducted in smaller groups as tutorials…It would seem sound pedagogy not to build further work on insecure foundations, nor to let the student continue with attitudes that must have a deleterious effect on his adaptation to university studies’. (Schonell, 1963, p76)

In addition to study habits, a students’ motivation was and continues to be one of the most correlated factors to student performance. In 1961, Baxter suggested that if universities could solve the problem of motivation, they could also solve the problem of failure. Motivation, apart from being associated with good teaching (Martin, et al., 1964; Sanders, 1963), was also strongly correlated with the family. Indeed, family were believed to have a direct impact on the motivation of the student in at least three ways: by conditioning them to aspire to higher

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goals (Crawley, 1936), by modelling success (Anderson, 1961), and by imbuing a positive attitude to academic study (Butterfield, 1970). Anderson (1961) sums this up thus:

Motivation is also associated with family. Where the father or older brother has already succeeded in business or a profession, the student is likely to derive confidence from this fact, whereas the boy [sic] who is the first representative of his family to attempt entry to the professional strata of society, is more likely to suffer doubts about his ability to succeed. The student following family tradition will also receive guidance not so readily available to the student from an occupationally alien background. (p45)

The ‘built-in’ handicap was not simply a matter of ability or skill. With the handicapping influences of the students’ background firmly established and the handicapping influences of the university increasingly recognised, the problem appeared to be one of ‘adjustment’, a psychological term arguably borrowed from Darwin’s ‘adaptation’ (Watson, 1914). Maladjustment was understood as a condition that emerges in adulthood from the frustrations and stress one experiences as a child, and potentially as a student in the home environment (see Lazarus, 1961; Rose, 1985, 1990). In the academic environment, maladjustment was seen to manifest in personality problems, such as motivation and debilitating anxiety, and behavioural problems, such as study habits (Anderson, 1961; Hughes, 1961; Schonell, 1963; Martin, et al., 1964; Murray, et al., 1957), and all these were seen to require greater self-discipline on the part of the student. Despite the provision of ‘helping services’, responsibility for overcoming these personal problems was largely individualised as a moral obligation. It was presented as an issue of personal strength.

Educational attainment, therefore, was coming to be seen less as a matter of intelligence and more a matter of personal strength. This is highlighted by Schonell, et al. (1962) in their explanation of the ‘good student’:

The student who has a good measure of persistence, industry, organising ability, thoroughness, who is well-adjusted and motivated is excellently armed to overcome such handicaps as average intelligence, poor home environment or university shortcomings in arrangement of courses, in lecturing, or in tutorials. Indeed a personality which will go on grappling with problems and overcoming difficulties is the most priceless asset to any university student. Conversely, a student who appears to possess every advantage of both intelligence and environment may lack personality strengths of these kinds and become a failure in university studies. (Schonell, et al., 1962 in Miller, 1974, p4)
Associated with personal strength was the student’s capacity for coping with anxiety. Anxiety was often correlated with the pressure of performance in ‘terminal examinations’, particularly given that failure would automatically disqualify students from further study (Martin, et al., 1964). While psychiatrists such as Furneaux (1962) diagnosed student anxiety as an effect of personality factors such as neuroticism, extroversion and drive\textsuperscript{30}, others associated it with the pressure to succeed, particularly for the many scholarship holders of poorer family backgrounds who were required to pass their exams or fail out of their courses (Schonell, 1962). Anxiety was seen to affect all social classes, as the student from a professional home might be under just as much, if not more, pressure to succeed as one from a working class home.

Overall, however, research into student failure could not predict the determining factors, which led Small (1966, p72) to suggest that

\begin{quote}
The performance of students is so idiosyncratic that a reduction in the failure rate would not easily be achieved by general measures. Attempted improvement should therefore be based upon the principle of meeting individual needs. (cited in Anderson & Eaton, 1982, p23)
\end{quote}

Small (1966) and others recommend improved guidance and counselling at the school and university level, and the resourcing of student services. After all, ‘…a little money spent on this area can be regarded as no more than insurance against wastage of resources’ (Priestley, 1958, p37)

The academic casualty, thus, because of its contradictory indicators was not easily eliminated through the selection process, and therefore became a problem that had to be attended to on campus. This particular problematic, I argue, created a space for student learning assistance to emerge as a therapeutic intervention – as general insurance against student failure and wastage.

vi. A therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty

Creating the environment to facilitate student adjustment within a social liberal framework translated to the provision of social services for health and guidance to assist students to conform to the demands of academic study. Within this context, the use of student advisors and counsellors came to the fore as a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty. These non-academic helping services were regarded as one means of bridging the gap in the relationship between students and staff and for teaching effective study habits – as general insurance against failure.

Bridging the distance between staff and students

While the Murray Committee Report (1957) suggested that ‘a relatively small centrally organised student guidance service has become necessary in the circumstances of many universities today’ (p41), it also emphasised the need for academic teaching staff to be responsible for as much of the guidance as possible. Likewise, Schonell (1963), in his own scholarship and in his contributions to policy, emphasised the importance of personal contact between staff and students in improving student ‘adaptation’. In his view, ‘the desire for fuller contact [between staff and students] should be satisfied because there is undeniably evidence that the socio-psychological factors that improve student adaptation also improve learning’ (pp80-1). Despite Murray and Schonell’s hopes that academic staff could provide more in the way of guidance for individual students, the massive expansion of student numbers, the reliance on mass lectures and the absence of smaller classes made this practically difficult.

The distance between students and staff, however, was not just physical. Katz and Magin, again as late as 1970, interviewed academic staff at various universities to investigate their views on current admission and selection policies. Although they found a diversity of opinion, ‘overall, 43 percent favoured more restricted entry whereas only 27 percent advocated more liberal entry, with 22 per cent approving the status quo’ (Katz & Magin, 1970, p7). Among the comments they cited, some academic staff considered students to be ‘in the bottom categories…of IQ’ (p7) ‘disastrous’, ‘duds’ and ‘mediocre students’ (pp7-8). Some suggested they were ‘great believers in getting an elite’ while others suggested universities should be ‘less selective’ (p8). Schonell (1962) comments on this when he emphasises the importance of
staff and student relationships, but laments the deterioration of staff-student ratios. It is in this context that he suggests that

…although lecturing is fundamentally a matter of human relationships - the better the rapport between teacher and student the more effective the teaching and learning - there is still in too many classes the flagrant neglect of this basic psychological principle. (Schonell, 1962, pviii)

With the physical and psychological distance between staff and students, Meddleton suggested furthering the use of existing counselling and guidance services:

…it is realised that we cannot teach and administer large classes in the same way we handle small classes…. Now appears to be the time for careful investigations into furthering the use of student advisors and counsellors. (Meddleton, 1965, p160)

Likewise, Schonell (1963) suggested

The value of an adequate counselling service as an integral part of university life cannot be overestimated as a force for dissipating student worries and thereby improving adaptation. (Schonell, 1963, p84)

Counsellors were required to take up the pastoral role that academic staff could not, and generally would not, take up. As Schonell (1962) suggested, ‘student counsellors… have a major role in the fostering of good relationships, by acting as agents to bring staff and students closer together’ (p371). Counsellors were required to facilitate students’ adjustment to a foreign and impersonal environment. They became the personal and caring face of the university for solving students’ personal problems. Schonell (1962) reinforced this in his suggestion:

…a student who has been helped by a counsellor to solve either study or personal problems will have felt that an adult at the university is personally interested in him. The experience is likely to have a favourable effect on his attitudes towards other members of staff. (p372)

Individual counselling can thus be understood as a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty – as one means for dealing with students’ personal problems and bridging the distance between staff and students.
Improving study habits

To bridge the handicapping influences of the student background and the handicapping influences of the university, the notion of adjustment was widely used. If differential psychology had diagnosed the problem of difference, behavioural psychology was looking for a way to provide the solution. Behaviourist psychology has been described as ‘a paradigm of psychology of social adaptation, concerned only with the overt conduct of individuals’ (Rose, 1990, p236). This involves a technical approach to manipulating behaviour towards the desired ends, ‘promot[ing] the capacity to cope in accordance with social norms among new sectors of the population and new institutional sites (Rose, 1990, p237). It is based on the promotion of self-regulation, self-discipline, self-control – the ‘systematic management of one’s natural and social environment’ (Rose, 1990, p237).

Study skills take a behavioural approach to training behaviour that emerged from the psychometric studies that were so prolific in the US at the time. With the university under some pressure to compensate for the perceived deprivation of the home, and to assist in students’ adjustment, study skills appeared as the panacea - packaged and programmed skill development. Robyak (1977) a counselling psychologist, who was concerned with the efficacy of study skills at the time suggested that

To a large extent, the study skills field has been dominated by the notion that marginal academic performance is a result of ineffective study skills and attitudes that can be remediated through instruction in effective study skills. Although intuitively pleasing, this notion rests on several related beliefs that have not been empirically demonstrated…. it is assumed that academically ineffective students need to acquire effective study habits and attitudes in order to become academically effective, and as such, many study skills programs are designed to provide instruction in effective study skills. (Robyak, 1977, pp171-2)

The teaching of study skills combined strategies for coping with anxiety and improving motor skills and study habits. It sought to produce the desired behaviours in students through general skills development teaching: time-management, note-taking, speed reading and memorising. To illustrate, in Frances Robinson’s (1941) Effective Behaviour, he proposed a reading technique called the SQ3R method, which proved to be highly influential over four decades later. As late as 1986, a first year psychology textbook (Coon, 1986) encouraged students to use this technique, suggesting
Robinson’s method is a simple way of combining studying with reading. The symbols S-Q-R-R-R stand for survey, question, read, recite, and review. Following these simple steps can help you understand ideas quickly, remember more, and review effectively for tests. (p16)

Not only were students encouraged to undertake these steps in the reading of the textbook, the very design of the textbook reflected this method of learning - of ‘combining reading with studying’ - because ‘research shows that this arrangement leads to improved learning and memory (Boker31, 1974; Melton32, 1978 cited in Coon, 1986, p17). Additionally, this book also includes tips on effective note-taking, which was said to require ‘active listening’,

Active listeners know how to control their attention to avoid classroom daydreaming. Here’s a listening/note-taking plan that works for many students. The important steps are summarised by the letters in the word LISAN, pronounced ‘listen’ (Carmen & Adams33, 1985 in Coon, 1986).

L = Lead. Don’t follow. Try to anticipate what the instructor is going to say….

I = Ideas. Every lecture is based on a core of important ideas. Usually an idea is introduced and examples or explanations are given. Ask yourself often, ‘What is the main idea now? What ideas support it?

S = Signal words. Listen for words that tell you the direction the instructor is taking. For instance, here are some of the groups of signal words:

- There are three reasons why…. Here come ideas
- Most important is…. Main idea
- On the contrary…. Opposite idea
- As an example… Support for main idea
- Therefore… Conclusion

A = Actively listen. Sit where you can hear and where you can be seen if you need to ask a question. Look at the instructor while he or she talks. Bring questions you want answered from the last lecture or from your reading. Raise your hand at the beginning

of class or approach your instructor before the lecture begins. Do anything that helps you to be active.

N = Note taking. As you listen, write down only key points. Listen to everything, but be selective and don’t try to write down everything. If you are too busy writing, you may not be able to grasp what is said. Any gaps in your notes can be filled immediately after class.

Here is something more that you should know: A recent study (Palkovitz & Lore, 1980) found that most students do make reasonably good notes – and then don’t use them! Most students wait until just before exams to review their notes – which have, by then, lost much of their meaning. If you don’t want your notes to look like hieroglyphics or ‘chicken scratches’, it pays to review them on regular basis. And remember, whenever it is important to listen effectively, the letters LISAN are a good guide. (Coon, 1986 p17)

For anyone working as a learning advisor in the present, these words will sound uncomfortably familiar. As contemporary practitioners, we have inherited these words and ideas as part of our everyday repertoire, and whether we choose to use them or not, most of us are not so familiar with their origins or research base. They seem like commonsense, and we tend to teach them like commonsense. In my case, I was handed this kind of material in a workshop package and sent into a classroom to enlighten, if not ‘empower’, my students.

The textbook (Coon, 1986) goes on to include tips like ‘study in a specific place’ based on research into ‘association’ (Beneke & Harris, 1972); ‘use spaced study session’ because ‘psychological research [none cited] suggests that spaced practice is a more efficient way to study…’; ‘Try mnemonics’ to memorise information for classes (Pressley, et al., 1980); ‘Test yourself’ (‘ask yourself questions’); ‘over-learn’, ‘continue studying beyond bare mastery of a topic’; ‘know your stuff’, ‘don’t rely on memory’; ‘[avoid] procrastination’, ‘students with high standards expect the impossible from themselves and end up with all-or-

nothing work habits (Burka & Yuen\textsuperscript{37}, 1983); [improve] ‘time management’, most procrastinators must face the self-worth conflict, but progress can be made by learning better study skills and more effective time management (Burka & Yuen, 1983) (all cited in Coon 1986, pp18-19) (\textit{my emphasis})

As can be seen from the brief review above, research in study skills was very much tied to self-efficacy, self worth, and the psychological dimensions of learning - that is the affective dimensions of, or obstructions to, learning, which could be remedied through acquiring the ‘tools of the trade’ in order to obtain greater self-efficacy. Students were required to be active agents of their own learning, and learning was tied almost exclusively to the students’ capacity for agentive action as learners on themselves in the academy.

In a later critique, Frederick, Hancock, James, Bowden and Macmillan (1981) would refer to the research and practices of study skills in the following way:

\begin{quote}
The empirical, measurement-oriented approach of research on learning in the first half of this century set the direction for a long while. Investigators concentrated heavily on quantifiable areas such as memory, perception, cognition and associated skills. Experiments focused on rote-learning, nonsense syllables, digit lists, verbatim recall and memory decay over time, and yielded a great deal of information about the mental processes underlying learning and memory performance (p5). The authors argue that this led to a ‘limited view of learning in which the ‘outcome’ was viewed in measurable outcomes of knowledge input and output.

This psycho-social diagnosis of disorder in the university continued along much the same path, and study skills and counselling were the norm in terms of student learning support well into the 1980s. Providing a broad perspective on the provision of ‘non-academic helping services offered in various forms at all Australian universities and many other tertiary institutions’ (p213), Frederick (1974), who was a key member of the Counselling service at the University of Melbourne, identified three models: the First Aid Model, the Ecosystem Model and the Living/Learning Model. All models, he suggested, were based on two
\end{quote}

assumptions: that students had personal problems that impacted on their progress, and that it was rational for universities to attend in some way to these problems:

Firstly, it is now accepted that...there are a variety of extra-academic problems and needs which can beset students and impinge destructively on their educational experience and growth. There are ‘causes of failure (to cope with university work) other than poor ability and lack of industry...these other conditions are chiefly personal problems, unsatisfactory conditions of study and health problems'. These words come for the Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee.

Secondly, that it is consequently rational and worthwhile for institutions to spend some proportion of its income on developing a variety of helping services to students to reduce the impact of these problems’. (Frederick, 1974, p214)

The three models indicated the way that counselling and the approach to therapeutic interventions did not simply wait on the margins of the academy for students to attend their services, but were also proactive in attempting to influence the learning environment in which students’ personal problems arose. To describe the ‘First Aid Model’, Frederick used the analogy of the campus as a kind of Olympic Stadium

…where there are helpful ushers (admissions officers, course advisors) at the entrance, first aid stations (health, counselling, student loans, housing and chaplains) around the perimeter, and benevolent guides (graduate placement, appointment officers) at the exits’. (Frederick, 1974, p214)

This model, he suggests, reflects a ‘problem-oriented philosophy; the various services are essentially passive, reacting only to problems presented by students’ (p214). In contrast, the Ecosystem Model saw welfare services ‘in a complex environment in which they not only respond to but initiate institutional changes. Not only are they concerned with the players, but in influencing the game where it seems to be unreasonably stressful or damaging’ (p215). In this sense, not only do the services concern themselves with the ‘treatment of the student, but the treatment of the environment which shapes student behaviour’ (p215).

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Finally, the Living/Learning Model was said to encapsulate the first two, but adds another dimension by situating ‘helping services within the institution to contribute to the general attempts to provide a stimulating and growth-promoting climate for all the students, not just to those with problems’ (p215). In this sense, welfare services seek to add personal growth dimensions to the academic content of a degree program. This last model, it is suggested, not only seeks to play the game, and change its rules, but also ‘to add other games’ (Semmens, 1974).

Frederick’s (1974) account provides a useful insight into the growing complexity of provision and reflection of social services in universities, but by the time of the Roe Report in 1982 (Roe, Foster, Moses, Sanker, & Storey, 1982), the discursive environment was beginning to change. The Roe Report (1982) was the product of a two year review of student services in 18 Australian universities for descriptive and evaluative purposes. While all universities offered a full range of social services, counselling and in most cases, study skills, thinking about the nature and location of student learning assistance was undergoing a major shift. As the 1970s continued, student learning problems came to be framed less as a problem of personality and study habits and more a problem of educational skills. Nonetheless, the deficit view of the student persisted but the source of the deficit would shift from the students’ interaction in the home to the students’ interaction with the education system, and the university in particular.

vii. Correspondence to the present

‘It is the moral and ethical duty of care of an institution to look after its students’
AALL President (Barthel, 2007)

Here I return to the notion that there can be no pre-discursive learning advisor. In speaking ourselves into existence historically since the emergence of student learning assistance as a political and institutionally sanctioned practice, and across the ruptures of various discursive formations, we find ourselves today as a ‘complex’ that is difficult to unravel. In this way, learning advisors are intersected by various truths that have their intelligibility in historical and political discursive formations. The ‘Correspondence to the present’ in each ACT seeks to draw the reader out of the historical analysis of emergence to identify how traces of the discursive formation outlined in the preceding sections can be found in the narratives of learning advisors in the present. At times, this section in each ACT will sound like a
cacophony as the multiple agreements and disagreements in relation to this formation are presented. I regard this as an important technique for ensuring that the narratives do not appear as easily delineated and seamless. Rather, they represent dissonance and tension even where there is agreement. Indeed, it is precisely the agreements and disagreements within and across each ACT that are shown to constitute the discursive complexity of the learning advisor with which this thesis is concerned. Again, it is important to emphasise the partial capacity of this thesis and this analysis to speak on behalf of the many and varied dimensions of the learning advisor in the present.

In this section, it is argued that aspects of the learning advisor’s self-constitution in the contemporary university can still be recognised as a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty. At the political level, this can be found in the reasoning that ‘it is the moral and ethical duty of care of an institution to look after its students’ (Barthel, 2007), as stated by the AALL President in his plenary address at the 2007 AALL Conference. At a symbolic level, the learning advisor as a ‘therapeutic intervention’ mediates the psychological and physical distance between staff and students induced by a mass education environment. The therapeutic dimension of our work appears in the consistent work with individual students, and the recognition that the personal is fundamentally interwoven with students’ academic performance. It appears in the desire to ground our expertise in our ‘knowledge’ of students’ backgrounds and their learning experience in the academy. And it appears in persistence of study skills in universities today as a particular approach to enabling students’ self-efficacy.

The learning advisor as therapeutic intervention identifies our place and role in the academy as bridging the gap between staff and students created by a mass education environment. This is illustrated by the comment:

Nowadays I see us as somewhere between the staff and the students. I think we are in this funny grey area where we are often trying to develop the communication between the staff and the students in some way to lead to meaningful learning. (7)

According to this view, were we able to create meaningful relationships between staff and students, we would no longer be needed (7). From this perspective, it is possible to recognise the emergence of the learning advisor as ‘agent of redemption’ not simply as a therapeutic intervention for the individual ‘academic casualty’, but as a therapeutic intervention for the deep division that mass education and its pedagogy creates between staff and students. This
division tends to be explained through the ever-present notions of the massification (13,14,15,16), expansion and diversification (2,7,13,14,15,17) of the student body combined with the casualisation of teaching (2,11,13) in higher education and the ever-expanding ratio of students to staff.

Addressing the physical distance between staff and students, and demonstrating an appreciation for the difficulties the conditions mentioned above create for discipline staff, one learning advisor suggested:

I think it’s got a lot to do with the change in nature of higher education insofar as …it’s not an elite anymore, it’s a mass education environment. Academics are under enormous pressure. They don’t have time. That’s not a criticism, but they are burdened with administration, management, research and actually teaching. So I think rather than [learning advising] being unique it’s become a necessity in that context or more of a necessity. I think it was always a necessity. It was a necessity since 1965. That’s when it started. But it’s become much more prominent…” (14)

Similarly, but addressing the psychological distance that these conditions create for staff and students, another learning advisor responded:

…. [discipline] staff really feel like they have lost control. It’s not a collegial environment anymore where you can say, you know, “this is how I would like to run my course”. Staff are under enormous pressure to teach really large classes, to be able to accommodate all sorts of disabilities, to be able to be fantastic teachers … so the other thing I’ve noticed is the build up of an “us and them”, a build up of this … line between staff and students. It was interesting at the … conference [where staff were] talking about students as problems….and on the other side you get the students’ perspective in here, so I think that … [we are seeing] an increase in anxiety and a real breakdown between staff and students… a somewhat adversarial relationship at times, and I think that both groups feel quite powerless…. And that is the environment now … (7)

These conditions are said to create a ‘niche position’ (13) in the university where learning advisors function as mediators between the lecturers and the students (16). This mediation role continues to reappear in each ACT of this thesis, but the nature of the discursive space it occupies, and how it is conceived and operationalised by the learning advisor varies. Indeed, this ‘mediating’ role of the learning advisor has multiple dimensions that will be explicated throughout the thesis.
In this ACT, the mediation role has a therapeutic function that is operationalised through practices that have a moral dimension, and that constitutes our work as offering a personalised relational approach to the individual student as a ‘complex learner’ (Ballard, 1994). It is in this dimension, that the contemporary learning advisor can regard themselves as ameliorating the alienating effects of an impersonal large university by offering them ‘a safe space and a familiar face’, treating them ‘as members of an intellectual enterprise’ (3) and ‘caring for them as individuals’ (2). It is through these practices that we recognise ourselves making a significant difference to individual students, as one learning advisor pointed out, ‘…for some of the students who see me, I am the only person who knows who they are’ (3).

The learning advisor as a therapeutic intervention recognises that students’ academic performance is intricately tied up with their personal lives and their identity (2,7,8). Correspondingly, a crucial aim of our practice is to make a difference to students’ confidence; we often work with students ‘whose learning is enormously affected by anxiety’ (6,7); or whose confidence has been damaged by previous educational experiences (7,2). It is through the individual consultation, for example, that learning advisors find themselves in a position to ‘listen’ (1,2,3,12,13,14,15) in order to make sense of ‘the puzzle of what is concerning [the student] or hindering their progress’.

Accordingly, the therapeutic work of the learning advisor is necessarily relational. It involves a ‘relationship with students’ (4), and this has an ‘emotional component’ (4), where ‘building trust’ (2,4) is paramount. It requires that we have ‘empathy’ (4,8,12,13,15) and ‘see things from the student’s perspective’ (7,8,11). We might even take up an ‘advocacy role for students’ (2,11), ‘hearing what their challenges and problems are, and helping provide a voice for that’ (11,16). From this perspective, ‘the fact that we are not marking students is very important’ (3). The therapeutic dimension is non-threatening, low-risk, and safe.

The learning advisor as a therapeutic intervention grounds our expertise in the knowledge and enhancement of the student experience of learning in higher education (11,13,16). Summing this up nicely, one learning advisor suggested,

I think we would lose the core of who we are if we didn’t deal personally with students. I think that’s the wisdom that we have, much of it has got to be grounded in the students themselves. That is, I think, one of the key contributions we can make to
our universities. We are one of the very few places that actually hears the voices of students. What I mean by hears, academically hears; I don’t know of anyone else who personally hears the voices of students; their experiences, their academic challenges. (16)

This unique perspective and the expertise it renders in the learning advisor can be experienced as a significant loss when a unit abandons the individual consultation altogether. A learning advisor who strongly identifies with this dimension of professional practice, can feel as though she is ‘floundering’ (11) without it because of the perceived loss of ‘insight’ (3), and ‘credibility with lecturers’ (11). Indeed, it is possible to argue that ‘we would be much less use to the university if we didn’t have input from what students tell us’ (3).

Individual consultations aside, the therapeutic dimension has the adverse effect of sustaining the legitimacy of courses on study habits or study skills in the guise of generic workshops. Despite the observable disavowal of these practices within the field, a cursory glance at a generic workshop schedule from most universities will reveal some attachment to these provisions in the name of service. In fact, the AALL benchmarking activity conducted in 2007 - 2008 (James, et al., 2007) found that all universities in Australia offered their students some form of generic skills workshops. In some units, the provision of generic workshops is central, and in others it is peripheral, but in the main, they tend to be a present feature of learning advising practice.

The experience of providing generic workshops is fairly typical across the board: they ‘are run twice a year normally, first and second semester … The students [are expected to] come every week. We usually start with twenty and then we have one at the end’ (10). These kinds of workshops assume and promote student efficacy in that they tend to teach an abstract set of principles about effective behaviour and academic skills that students are then expected to apply across the various disciplinary demands being made on them. As one learning advisor stated,

…you are taking apart, deconstructing, analysing what needs to happen and working with students to build strategies to master their learning. That might be strategies of independence, it might be strategies of research, it might be strategies of negotiating with supervisors, it might be strategies of delivering and responding to questions in a seminar context. But it’s making the implicit explicit, the stuff that we don’t talk about or that isn’t often talked about in an explicit way. What do you mean by arguments?
What does a business report look like as opposed to a computing business report? How is a law tort different to an essay? In order to talk to students about that, we need to be able to understand it ourselves. How is it constructed, what are the features and I don’t mean that in a formulistic way because students need to be able to transfer and to be flexible in the way in which they deliver materials. So one essay in this course might look like this, but they need to write an essay that looks like that and responds to these kinds of imperatives from another discipline. They’ve got to be flexible and transfer skills. (14)

At the very least, these workshops are intended to increase student confidence by providing them with strategies to ‘take control of their learning’ (13,14,16) and ‘be independent’ (7,10,11,14,15,16,17).

The tension between the commitment to promoting students’ well-being and the resistance to generic skills approaches is part of the ontological stammering in the present. Despite the disavowal of ‘study skills’ as a legitimate educational approach to facilitating student learning among practitioners in the contemporary university, we still find ourselves assisting students with ‘study problems’ (5), ‘time management’ (5,13,14,16) ‘how to learn’ (16), ‘how to study’ (5). We might also be interested in such things as ‘mind-mapping’(2,5) or ‘speed-reading’(5). In times of need, we might also find ‘Skinner’s behaviourism…quite useful sometimes for people who are really totally blocked to focus on a behaviour [such as the physical act of writing]’ (7).

Despite their persistence, generic skills approaches tend to be highly criticised within the field. One learning advisor, for example, lamented ‘we still have people here who set up a whole study skills program…this is 2008 for god’s sake!’ (6). What is clear, however, is that even if learning advisors do not value study skills, our universities and in many cases our units, do. We will often find ourselves, therefore, ‘institutionally pushed into doing these more generic, extracurricular things’ (12, 15), even where we regard them as ‘decontextualised’ (7), ‘ludicrous’ (15), or ‘ineffective’ (4). One of the greatest frustrations is the perception of our work as mere study skills, which locates our work ‘on the outside’ (6) of disciplinary practice, and the fact that ‘we’re being pushed and it’s just assumed that we will go on doing it’ (12).

In summary, the therapeutic dimension of learning advising work, which has its emergence in the historical, political, social and economic conditions outlined in ACT-I, continues to have
salience in the work today. It is evident in the mediating role learning advisors take up between staff and students where learning advisors: engage in relational practices that recognise the student as a complex whole; recognise themselves as student advocates; ground their wisdom and expertise in their knowledge and appreciation for the student learning experience; position themselves as student advocates; and deliver study skills and generic workshops to promote student self-efficacy. The therapeutic dimension also, however, locates the problem of student learning with the individual, and as such justifies the positioning of learning advising work outside the curriculum and pedagogy of the university.

**ACT-I Summary**

In summary, *ACT-I* locates the emergence of the therapeutic dimension of the learning advising identity in the psycho-social diagnosis of student learning problems that was the result of the convergence of social liberal political reason and the historical, political economic imperatives of post-war reconstruction. As universities expanded according to the meritocratic principles of ‘equality of opportunity’, the specialist pedagogue emerged as counselling and guidance to provide students with a therapeutic intervention to assist them in their adaptation to an impersonal, content-heavy and elitist learning environment, bridging the relationship between staff and students and teaching effective study methods.

Today, traces of this particular constitution of the learning advisor can be found in the way that some learning advisors recognise themselves as student advocates, located somewhere between the staff and students, and offering personalised services to students who may or may not be at risk. It also contains traces of the generic study skills approach and the belief that training students in behaviours that resemble self-efficacy can and will impact on their retention and success in university.

This particular constitution of the learning advisor is both desired and disavowed. In some cases, it allows us to put particular arguments forward regarding our unique role and perspective in the academy and the value of the relational aspects of our work, and on the other it relegates us to the margins of the academy.
ACT-II: An educational intervention for the social casualty

‘The opposition between economic efficiency and the development of the individual is too simple-minded in a society where individuals without qualifications are social casualties’
OECD Spokesperson (J.R. Gass, 1970, p36)

ACT-II Introduction

i The university as ‘social leveller’
ii Problematising social wastage
iii Making sense of participation
iv Representing the social casualty
v An educational intervention for the social casualty
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ACT-II Summary

ACT-II Introduction

ACT-II demonstrates how student learning assistance was transformed from a therapeutic and non-academic helping service concerned with the psycho-social subjectivity of the student to an educational, academic skills intervention for the socio-culturally disadvantaged. This ACT begins in the early 1970s at the intersection of critical sociological theory and several sustained crises which culminated in a social disorder that demanded a new logic for governing conduct in advancing western liberal democracies. This new logic would entail a ‘hard’ social liberal reasoning, which was informed by the work of critical sociologists whose (neo)Marxist analyses of socio-economic relations interpreted social inequality not as consensual and necessary to order as the functional sociologists had, but as conflict in the oppressive and (re)productive hegemony of an exploitative capitalist economy. Although the crises of the 1970s would mean that this logic could not sustain itself, it had the profound effect of shifting the policy preoccupation from academic wastage, as we saw in ACT-I, to ‘social wastage’ (Hunter, 1994) and the redistribution of opportunity in ACT-II. It is here that the psycho-social subject of higher education that we saw in ACT-I is reconstituted as a socio-cultural object of government.

In this particular historical context, the education system itself came under fire as the perceived ‘meritocracy’ operating in the education system became politicised as reproducing
class and gender inequalities (eg. Ashenden, 1979; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Connell, et al., 1982). Whereas university study had been considered the meritocratic privilege of the bright student within the conservative rhetoric of ‘equality of opportunity’ that had underpinned the expansion of higher education since the 1960s, university study would become the ‘social right’ of the under-represented. Education in general, and the university in particular, found itself cast as an ‘agent of redemption’ (Popkewitz, 1998) for the least privileged sectors of society. This created a new frame for thinking about intervention in the higher education context: in particular, the target of intervention shifted from ‘academic wastage’ to ‘social wastage’.

In Australia, this period saw the Commonwealth assume control of the higher education sector financially and symbolically with the Whitlam Labor Government in 1974. As limping economies emerged from the aftermath of the 1970s, under the guidance of the OECD, education and training were heralded as the key mechanisms for moving the economy and social relations forward. This time, the targets were the ‘under-utilised’ (Hunter 1996) – minorities, disaffected youth and the disadvantaged. In 1985, the Hawke Labor Government introduced its Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP). This initiative is evidence of the Government’s need to neatly define those domains of difference that required State intervention in the name of social justice. By 1990 and the publication of a Fair Chance for All, students’ socio-cultural differences were petrified into equity categories through which governments could regulate the conduct of universities. Defined as a problem of educational disadvantage, students were considered educationally (culturally and linguistically) handicapped and in need of educational remediation. In this context, student learning assistance developed an academic face. Counselling and study skills advisors morphed into ‘professional teachers’ (HEC, 1994), as learning, language, literacy and numeracy teachers were employed to provide the necessary compensatory and transitional academic assistance to the educationally disadvantaged. By 1990 all universities had some form of academic student learning assistance (Samuelowicz, 1990).

i. The university as ‘social leveller’

This section provides one interpretation of the way that the university as an apparatus of government was reconfigured from ‘development panacea’ to ‘social leveller’ from the 1970s,
as addressing the problem of social wastage (as opposed to academic wastage) through the redistribution of opportunity became the defining logic of good government. It locates this reconfiguration at the intersection of the rise and fall of hard social liberal reasoning and the falling away of social, economic and political stability. The historical crises that emerged out of the ensuing instability, such as increasing social tension and changing economic and industrial circumstances in Australia and other OECD member countries, precipitated a policy preoccupation with the access and participation of youth, minorities and the socially disadvantaged in higher education. It is at this intersection that I locate a rupture in the diagnosis of social difference, from the psycho-social effects of family background on the individual that we saw in ACT-I to the socio-cultural effects of the economy on the social group. In ACT-II, I demonstrate how social difference as a condition of society was transformed from a ‘natural order’ to a highly politicised condition of inequality referred to as ‘social wastage’ (Hunter 1994) that was said to require government intervention.

**Politcising social difference**

It is possible to make the case that post-compulsory education, including the university, was reconfigured as a social leveller in the 1970s against a backdrop of increasing social unrest and political activism. Indeed, universities as the locus of intellectual thought in society found themselves deeply implicated in social disorder. Educational expansion, it seemed, had had the unintended effect of fostering radicalism among at least some university students and staff. The highly visible atrocities of the Vietnam War had incited a growing repulsion towards the destructive potential of science and the relationship between the university and the military-industrial complex (Davies, et al., 2006). In 1968, students across the world were engaged in often violent protests against social and political injustice. Political activism and the wave of ‘new left’ politics had become part of student culture (Johnson, 1983), and this permeated the western democratic political context.

In this context, social consensus as a theoretical model of social order had become increasingly untenable. The ‘natural order’ of inequality that we saw in ACT-I, so firmly established through the psychological analysis of the individual and the structural-functional analysis of society in previous decades, had lost its legitimacy. Inspired by neo-marxist, conflict and cultural interpretations of social (dis)order, there was a growing intolerance for the normalised ‘structural’ social and economic inequalities embedded in the division of
labour in capitalist economies (Angus, 1986). The class, sex and racial discrimination of the old order were, at least notionally, condemned.

Concern for the ‘disadvantaged’, ‘subordinate’ and ‘oppressed’ emerged as functional and consensual views of social inequality gave way to critical, cultural reproduction and conflict theories in the 1970s (for example, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Collins, 1971; Entwistle, 1979a; Gramsci, 1971). These theories revived and transformed Marxist interpretations of class conflict and the Gramscian notion of hegemony (Connell, 1975, 1977). Conflict theories shifted the social interpretation of inequality from ‘consensus’ among unequals to ‘struggle’ between interests. Reproduction and correspondence theories interpreted the ‘egalitarian’ concept of meritocracy as cultural hegemony and ideological oppression (for example, Angus, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Understanding power as embedded in social roles and structures, particularly class, gender and ethnicity, political struggles were concerned with the ‘emancipation’ and ‘empowerment’ of the marginal and excluded through the development of self-consciousness and political agency, and education would be seen to play a central role (for example, Friere, 1972; Giroux, 1981, 1983).

The rise and fall of hard social liberal policy

In Australia, the Whitlam Labor Government’s radical and short reign (1972-1975) would mark the high water mark of welfarism. Whitlam’s election campaign ‘It’s Time’ promised social and industrial reform, and in government, its planning and policy agendas embodied the ‘hard’ version of equality of opportunity (Power, et al., 1985). Unlike the soft version which characterised previous social liberal governments, this version adhered to the principle of positive discrimination – a principle that we will see was advocated by the OECD (1970) - which promoted the ‘maximisation of benefits to the least advantaged’ (Power, Roberstson, & Beswick, 1985, p11). Overturning the natural order of inequality, it very deliberately sought the active redistribution of wealth and opportunity to the least privileged sectors of the community.

In hindsight, we could say that the 1970s began in a spirit of optimism. At the economic level, the expansion of the 1960s was expected to continue unabated (Lennep, 1970). At the social level, the Whitlam reforms marked a significant shift in government responsibility towards issues of social justice. But like a comedy of unintended effects, the 1970s would be
characterised by economic, social and political turmoil which would create specific social and economic exigencies that would shape educational reform into the 1980s.

While the Whitlam Government will be remembered for its idealism and efforts towards social justice, the timing of its economic management strategies would have a long-lasting effect on Australian politics. No sooner had Whitlam begun his massive reforms, the Australian economy fell into a deep and sustained recession that was paralleled in economies worldwide. The Government’s social policies for expanding the public sector, opening education, providing free health care, supporting the unemployed, attending to Aboriginal welfare and promoting ‘equal pay’ for women (Congalton & Najman, 1974) coincided with a global economic downturn characterised by negative to limited growth, high inflation and rising unemployment. This coincidence, and some would argue the Labor Government’s inability to manage the economy (Cameron, 1975; Lynch, 1975), pushed the limits of Keynesian economics through an expansionary monetary policy blowing out the budget deficit in 1974-75 from the intended $570 million to $2,567 million (Lynch, 1975). And still the recession continued. Not only had the consensual social order become untenable, but the logic of the welfare state and Keynesian economics began to stutter.

A crisis of the welfare state

The events of the 1970s began to present as a crisis of the welfare state. It was a time of economic and social instability featuring a rapidly changing labour market, racial tension, high youth unemployment, an oversupply of graduates and a significant surplus of unskilled labour (Harman, 1980; OECD, 1976). At one level, the economic downturn placed unprecedented fiscal pressure on the Government at a time when it required economic growth to sustain its welfare promises. At another, it was producing unforseen social consequences as existing racial tensions in Australian society became highlighted and exacerbated by the economic conditions. The collision of political, economic, social circumstance would require new forms of reasoning in governing the body politic.

One of the most serious crises that emerged in this period was the social and economic disadvantage experienced by Australia’s significant migrant population. Between 1947 and 1970, over two million immigrants from Europe, Yugoslavia, the Middle East and Asia had been brought to Australia, 64 per cent through Government finance, to promote the growth of
Australian manufacturing and construction industries (Birrell & Hay, 1976). Largely from rural and isolated areas of their home countries, the new Australians ‘lacked education’ and entered unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. Rizvi (1985) argues that this immigration campaign was seen as a cheap solution to filling the most undesirable jobs in an increasingly affluent society. Ultimately, the campaign created a racial bifurcation in the workforce (Birrell & Hay, 1985), with migrants functioning largely as the ‘unskilled underclass’, a ‘large army of reserve labour’ (Rizvi, 1985, p8). It was this unskilled underclass that was the first to become unemployed as the economy and labour market turned. As the demand for unskilled labour declined and unemployment and inflation soared, socio-economic and demographic studies were beginning to provide graphic evidence of the poverty, structural inequality and systematic disadvantage that migrants in Australia were experiencing (see Rizvi, 1985).

Not surprisingly then, ethnic politics concerned with social reform was on the rise (Kalantzis & Cope, 1984). Whereas the expectation had been one of social and cultural assimilation, with the new Australians expected to shed their culture and language to assimilate to the Australian way of life (Wynhausen, 1985), it was clear that this was not how migration and settlement patterns were working in Australia. The perceived problem of cultural or ethnic ‘minorities’ (Sayad, 1987) was their seeming unwillingness to function as a seamless part of the social order – their deliberate ‘disorderliness’. By 1973, the ‘new Australians’ and their children accounted for almost a quarter of the entire Australian population (Wynhausen, 1973). Yet rather than a unified society, a linguistic and culturally pluralistic one was emerging (Buckland, 1973). Ethnic groups were forming their own communities, speaking their own languages, ‘clinging to what [they saw] as worth maintaining from [their] own culture’, ‘treasuring the ‘vestiges of [their] “apartness”’ (Knittel & Hill, 1973, p25). Like social consensus, Keynesian economics and the logic of the welfare state, the policy of assimilation was failing.

Consequently, it can be argued that governing society was seen to require the provision of assistance for these ‘minorities’ to reconcile and integrate their differences within the host country. With cultural pluralism undermining the consensual social order, the policy of social and cultural assimilation was replaced with ‘political integration’ in an effort to actively involve the migrant population in the social, political and economic institutions of the nation (Rizvi, 1985); to integrate them into a more affluent, linguistically proficient, skilled and participatory way of life, like good citizens. As a political means for fostering social cohesion
with a diverse population, the Whitlam Government produced a reference paper entitled *A Multicultural Society for the Future* (Grassby, 1973). But it was under the neo-conservative liberal Fraser Government that Multiculturalism, as a political means for ‘valuing’ and integrating social difference, became an official government policy in 1978 (Rizvi, 1985). Social existence would now be ordered through the means of social ‘cohesion’ – the recognition, tolerance and integration of difference.

*The university and the amelioration of social wastage*

Social cohesion and economic prosperity were increasingly seen to reside in the socialisation and mobilisation of minorities, youth and the disadvantaged. Responding to the social and political challenges that the various crises had created for the western liberal democratic order, at the international level, social unrest was interpreted as symptomatic of a society undergoing an unprecedented level of rapid change. As the Director of the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, J.R. Gass (1970) suggested at the OECD *Conference on Policies for Economic Growth: Educational Policies for the 1970s:*

The rapid economic growth, technological advance and social change of the past three decades have transformed the relationship between the individual and society and, to a significant degree, have torn down the national, class, professional, ideological and religious supports which provided the social framework for the individual. Student protests may be seen as one of the responses to this new situation. (p35)

This conference provided something of a retrospective on the educational expansion that had occurred in OECD countries since the 1950s. The appraisal was not wholly positive. The ‘runaway’ educational expansion of the 1960s was critiqued as inadequate to the changing social and economic forces that western democracies were facing (Gass, 1970). With some reference to the student protests, and the persistence of ‘structural inequalities’ created through a ‘reproductive division of labour’, it was suggested that far too heavy a focus had been placed on manpower production and the use of macro-economic indicators of economic growth. In particular, educational expansion had disappointed in its intention to provide greater ‘equality of opportunity’ (Gass, 1970, p35): it was found that loosely managed, *ad hoc* educational expansion did not necessarily improve the life chances and economic and social well-being of the most disadvantaged sectors of society (Frankel & Halsey 1970). Education, it was claimed, was failing in its most fundamental social and cultural roles because it had
failed to attend to the qualitative aspects of growth – ‘the betterment of living conditions’ for all (Lennep, 1970, p21).

Such evaluations of educational expansion arguably consecrated the social interpretation of inequality in higher education that would become the hallmark of the 1970s and 80s. Educational reform from this point would at least rhetorically promote its social aims over its economic aims. Marginson (2004) refers to this period as one characterised by ‘equality politics’ (p1), where: the university would assume an important social function in creating a fairer and more just society; and accordingly, could be made more inclusive of unrepresented social groups through the expansion of places, a more targeted focus on the social composition of participation, and the implementation of strategies that could improve the access of the most disadvantaged social groups.

**ii. Problematising social wastage**

Whereas in *ACT-I* the policy preoccupation was with academic wastage and student failure, in *ACT-II* the policy preoccupation is with social wastage and participation as the key targets of government intervention. This section illustrates how the problematisation of participation of minorities, youth and the socially disadvantaged in higher education created a discursive space for ‘scientific’ explanations of inclusion and exclusion to emerge. It also demonstrates how that discursive space became occupied by sociological constructs that diagnosed non-participation as a problem of social, economic and educational disadvantage. Although historically this problematisation and diagnosis would be framed largely as an issue of social justice, it is argued that governing participation may have had more to do with the political imperative of ‘governmentalising ability’ (Hunter, 1994).

As mentioned above, the OECD *Conference on Policies for Economic Growth: Educational Policies for the 1970s*, provided a retrospective on the educational expansion that had occurred in the 1960s. At this conference, it was Professor Albert Halsey\(^\text{39}\), who championed the argument that the economic aims of education could not succeed without sufficient

attention to its social aims. Tellingly, Halsey, a prolific researcher in the sociology of education, was appointed Chairman of the Governing Board of the OECD’s newly established Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) (OECD, 1987). Halsey, along with other prominent sociologists in the UK, had been publishing extensively since the 1960s on the role of education in advanced industrial society. For example, Halsey, Floud and Anderson’s (1961) collection of essays from the UK and US explores the seemingly inevitable interrelationship between Education, Economy and Society. This publication begins with an acknowledgement of education having become ‘a crucial type of investment for the exploitation of modern technology’ (p1). Its essays explore: the transformation of education from ‘a consumption luxury to a productive investment’; the dubious link between education and social mobility; and the social factors that impinge on selection procedures and notions of ability and attainment.

The Conference set a new direction for policy and planning in OECD countries for the 1970s. With a sociologist at the helm of the Governing Board of CERI, the renewed focus on the social aims of higher education was said to require a different kind of logic to govern policy, planning and the allocation of resources. This new logic involved a concerted focus on the redistribution of opportunity. The efficiency of public investment in education would now be measured, not simply through the macro-indicators of economic growth (ie. GNP), but through the education sector’s achievements and failures in a range of economic and social objectives (Gass, 1970, p35). Politically legitimate educational expansion and economic growth had to translate into a better ‘quality of life’ for all social groups, to realise a more ‘just social order’ (Frankel & Halsey, 1970, p12).

Using the lens of governmentality, Hunter (1994) suggests, however, that this doctrine of equality was not a new moral gaze under the mantra of ‘all men are created equal’ (p111), rather ‘it was provided by the governmental goal of making them more equal, at least from the point of view of their contribution to the economic prosperity and social security of the state’ (p111). According to Hunter (1994), it had everything to do with the ‘governmentalising’ of ability’ (p124),

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40 Halsey and Floud were the key sociologists from Oxford University engaged in the 1962 debate about student difference and the representation of the academic casualty mentioned in ACT-I.IV of this thesis.
In correlating lower class background with low participation and ability levels and low-prestige occupational destinations, [the various social] surveys created a new social problem or object of governmental intervention. Called ‘social wastage’ or ‘reserve of talent’ this problem presented the challenge of achieving an optimal social and economic training of under-utilised sectors of the population, and of overcoming the social barriers standing in the way (p110).

This concern with governmentalising ability can be identified at the international level with the range of OECD research projects that provided a micro-economic analysis of youth labour markets at the time which were indicating a ‘hard core’ element with high turnover (OECD, 1980). This particular research was seen to indicate ‘the social deprivation of specific groups in society which need special programmes if they are to break out of the vicious circle of multiple disadvantage’ (Lennep, 1981 in OECD, 1981, p11). In Australia, this work was carried out with an emphasis on the educational participation of youth and ethnic minorities (CTEC, 1982; Young, Petty, & Faulkner, 1980). Migrant children, in particular, were seen to embody cumulative disadvantage with ‘many educational and labour market handicaps’ further increasing the perception of social wastage (OECD, 1983).

Of interest is the link made between social group and deprivation that warranted ‘a more selective, targeted approach’ (Lennep, 1981 in OECD, 1981, p11) in the government of subjectivity. Migrant children became the target of rather urgent special compensatory education programmes providing ‘effective basic language training as a first step in creating new ways of organising and providing vocational education and training to people who have different cultural views about the place of work in life’ (OECD, 1983, pp58-9, my emphasis).

In political terms, participation of the socially disadvantaged, disaffected youth and ethnic minorities in education would be a key indicator of social and economic prosperity. At the operational level, the OECD recommended: that governments take a greater role in harnessing and controlling educational expansion (Lennep, 1981, p23); that there be a shift in focus from ‘equality of access’ to ‘equality of achievement’ (Gass, 1970, p37; Frankel & Halsey, 1970,

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p15); that the use of ‘positive discrimination’\textsuperscript{42} be considered to break the cycle of multiple disadvantage and poverty of social groups (Frankel & Halsey, 1970, p13); and that the curriculum and teaching methods be improved for ‘children of disadvantaged groups’ (Frankel & Halsey, 1970, p15). With a shift in focus from the individual to the social group, higher education would become an agent of redemption for the socially disadvantaged (Popkewitz, 1998). This, it can be argued, precipitated a policy preoccupation with participation.

When the Whitlam Labor Government assumed power in Australia in 1972, it promoted participation in education as the key to economic growth and social mobility. In line with the OECD recommendations, the Whitlam Government assumed Commonwealth control over the funding and planning of higher education in 1974, and introduced measures to broaden the access of the disadvantaged in higher education by expanding places, abolishing student fees (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003, p11), and establishing the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS)\textsuperscript{43} (Anderson, Boven, Fensham, & Powell, 1980). These initiatives assumed the greatest barrier to educational access was financial - a socio-economic disadvantage.

iii. Making sense of participation

If the key terms concerning student performance in ACT-I were failure and wastage, in ACT-II they are access and attrition. Prior to the late 1960s, educational research and reform had been concerned with maximising student performance through the improvement of exclusionary techniques, such as selection and preparation procedures. In ACT-II, higher education reform would now be framed in terms of the equity problematic and the redistribution of opportunity. This particular frame for thinking about participation entailed the alignment of the social composition of the university student cohort with the social composition of society in general. In order to achieve this, policy-driven research to identify disadvantage sought to correlate the socio-cultural variables of class, age, gender and ethnicity with educational and workforce participation. The Government, in particular, funded


\textsuperscript{43} A means-tested grants scheme to provide financial assistance for enrolled students.
various demographic, educational, labour and evaluative studies in the 1980s to make sense of university participation largely in terms of the social composition of students, access to higher education and participation in the labour market (eg. Abbott-Chapman, Hughes, & Wyld, 1991; Anderson & Vervoorn, 1983; CSC, 1984; HERT, 1983; Holdsworth, 1986; Power, 1985; Power, et al., 1985). In this sense, we can say that this kind of educational research was engaged in what Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000) call ‘the equity problematic’.

The equity problematic and the discourse of exclusion

The equity problematic lays at the heart of research that ‘examines questions of representation and access of individuals and groups to educational and social practices’ (Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000, p5). Through the lens of this particular problematic, exclusion is recognised as a socio-economic/cultural phenomenon that can and should be eliminated through direct governmental intervention; that is, through strategies of inclusion, such as ‘positive discrimination’ (Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000; Rose, 1999). What is useful about Popkewitz and Lindblad’s analysis is that it allows us to see the social constructedness of this particular way of thinking about participation in higher education.

Providing a critique of this particular problematic, Goodwin (1996, p11) suggests

The equity problematic schematically treats inclusion and exclusion as analytically and empirically distinct. At least in theory, inclusion is made the normative standard to examine its opposition, practices that prevent inclusion…Exclusion, then, is considered continually against the background of something simultaneously included (cited in Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000, p10).

This normative analysis produces ‘a discourse of exclusion’ (p10) which locates participation as the norm to be enforced, and proliferates the social categories and dimensions of ‘exclusion’ or ‘non-participation’ to be defined and addressed by policy and practice. But as Poynton (1997) reminds us, ‘Social categories are not eternal truths: they arise from specific times, in specific places, to do specific work’ (p17). Accordingly, individuals find themselves members of target groups with their ‘handicaps’ of class, race, gender and ethnicity predefined to inform the necessary programmes designed to empower and enable them. Further, Popkewitz and Lindblad (2000) go on to suggest that policy-driven research narrows the field of exclusion to ‘the more spectacular forms of cumulative disadvantage’ distracting
attention away from the problems of all social groups (p10). The problem of the discourse of exclusion is that it promotes a certain kind of ‘target practice’ that potentially creates disabling subjectivities for those who fit the criteria and ignores the potential realities of those who do not.

For the specialist educator, the existence of social categories and the attendant assumptions about educational need provide both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, it provides significant justification for the existence of the learning advisor. On the other, it creates often impossible and improbable subjectivities with which to work. In particular, the identification of socially disadvantaged students and the design of ‘appropriate’ educational interventions relies entirely on data about the social group that says very little about the individual. As such, it is arguable that these practices imprecisely target abstract categories of presumed social disadvantage rather than respond in any real way to actual educational demands.

iv. Representing the social casualty

In **ACT-I**, the academic casualty was shown to be diagnosed as a psycho-social deviance from the ‘norm’, characterised in terms of a lack of preparation, personality problems and inadequate behavioural traits that were seen to stem from the individual’s family background. In **ACT-II**, the academic casualty is displaced by the social casualty whose difference is diagnosed as a socio-economic disadvantage and is characterised in terms of a lack of appropriate cultural skills, values, attitudes and educational opportunity. It is argued that parallel with the production of categories of social disadvantage, specialist educators emerged whose ethical agency to ‘make a difference’ to the individual and social group was framed largely in terms of language, learning and literacy support. In this section, we see how those social characteristics become recognised and reproduced in the notions of the ‘non-traditional’ student in the 1970s and the ‘equity’ student in the 1980s and 90s.

*The non-traditional student*

The ‘non-traditional student’, as a new social category with which to ‘describe’ a student’s identity, entered the ERIC Digest in June 23, 1977 (ERIC, 2010). ‘Non-traditional students continue to be defined within the institution of education as ‘Adults beyond traditional school age (beyond the mid-twenties), ethnic minorities, women with dependent children, under-
prepared students, and other special groups who have historically been underrepresented in postsecondary education’. Politically, however, the non-traditional student represents the social casualty - a member of society of working age, who for various social, cultural and economic reasons had previously had limited access to higher education and thus lacked the qualifications to move beyond their current position. These students were the new targets of social and educational reform.

Despite the ‘progressive’ intentions, labelling students as ‘non-traditional’ can be said to be a process of othering those whose institutional identities do not readily fit within an existing, albeit elusive, norm despite its ‘progressive’ intentions. Similar to the discourse of exclusion, which continually regards exclusion against the backdrop of that which is simultaneously included, the ‘non-traditional student’ is continually regarded against the backdrop of the ‘traditional’ student, even though the definition of the traditional student is elusive. Further, although the diagnosis of disadvantage tended to be socio-economic, the prognosis tended to be cultural. This was due to the persistent sociological method of correlating socio-economic status with cultural values, attitudes and behaviours.

The socio-cultural prognosis is evident in the first comprehensive longitudinal study of the social composition of students across the entire higher education system, commissioned by the Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee (AVCC) in 1975 - *Students in Australian Higher Education: A Study of their Social Composition since the Abolition of Fees* (Anderson, et al., 1980). This study, which proposed to develop ‘a general baseline to assess the effects of the changes in funding and structure on the social composition of higher education’ (pxix), was essentially a socio-cultural analysis from a liberalist perspective; that is, it linked socio-economic status with particular cultural norms, values and aspirations. While the research provided a semantic shift in the representation of social background from ‘social class’ based on father’s occupation as we saw in *ACT-I*, to Socio-Economic Status (SES) based on father’s occupation, education and income (Anderson, et al., 1980, p3), this was merely an extension of previous assumptions. The study explicitly distanced itself from the theoretical

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44 ERIC Descriptor of the non-traditional student - add date 06/23/1977. **Related Terms:** Adult Students; Educationally Disadvantaged; First Generation College Students; Non-traditional Education; Open Enrolment; Postsecondary Education; Prior Learning; Re-entry Students; Special Degree Programs; Special Needs Students. Accessed, 21/7/10
analysis of inequality that conflict theory offered, suggesting that such an approach failed to deliver systematic and quantifiable data. Instead, the study drew on the liberalist tradition of: 1. continuing its focus on the father’s occupation; 2. ordering the social status of occupations hierarchically; 3. correlating this to level of income and education; and 4. using this data to make assumptions about the ‘lifestyle, access to resources and aspirations of the children’ (Anderson, et al., 1980, p3).

By the late 1970s, despite the abolition of fees, a number of studies correlating participation and success with social variables such as gender, age, ethnicity and SES, were indicating that something other than financial disincentive was impacting on the participation of the social groups - non-participation was not simply a matter of financial barriers. For example, while a significant number of mature age students (Eaton & West, 1980)45, and women in particular (Beswick, 1975 in Anderson, et al., 1980) were benefitting from the various initiatives of government, this was not seen to be extending to the redemption of those of the lowest socio-economic status. Further, Access to Privilege (Anderson & Vervoorn, 1983) demonstrated that despite the many and varied efforts of government, students from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds were still less likely to gain access and less likely to succeed in university study.

Making sense of this in terms of withdrawal and attrition, Power, et al. (1986) found that those students most at risk of withdrawing suffered the greatest social disadvantage: they had minimal social and financial support and competing family or work commitments. However, those most at risk of failing suffered the greatest academic disadvantage: moderate matriculation scores, males, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds (piii). For the student from non-English speaking backgrounds, the child of migrants and, increasingly, a number of international students, the problem of language became a defining factor of academic disadvantage and the public cause of declining academic standards (Bock & Lewit, 1984; Devos, 2003).

45 Mature age student enrolments increased from 10% of the total student cohort in 1970 to 20% in 1974 and 28% in 1976 (Eaton & West, 1980)
For the migrant child, it was perceived that their ‘language problems’, combined with the parents’ lack of ‘educational consciousness’ (Buckland, 1973, p15), and in some cases ‘illiteracy in their first language’ (OECD, 1983), prevented their participation and success in education. Between 1950 and 1970, 200,000 children in Australia were born to migrant parents (Knittel & Hill, 1973), and inadequately equipped schools and teachers (Kalantzis & Cope, 1984) were said to be struggling to cope with the ‘remedial’ work that these ‘functional illiterates’ (Knittel & Hill, 1973), ‘educationally retarded’ (Knittel & Hill, 1973), ‘disadvantaged’ (Birrell & Hay, 1976), ‘handicapped’ and ‘confused’ (Buckland, 1973) children from poor, unskilled, non-English speaking families were seen to require. From the 1950s, these students had been considered ‘slow learners’ for whom no special provision was made (Poynton, 1997; Rizvi, 1985). It was only in 1970 that the Government earmarked $4.7 million for migrant English teaching in schools (Knittel & Hill, 1973), and in the mid 1970s introduced the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) (Beswick, 1987; Nebauer & Sungaila, 1980).

The language and literacy theory and teaching that found prominence through these initiatives include critical literacy, systemic-functional linguistics and the teaching of genre in the 1980s and 90s, (Christie, et al., 1991; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Derewianka, 1990; Painter & Martin, 1986; Rothery, 1994; Williams, 1994). These approaches, along with a number of the teachers, would find a space for themselves in the university environment.

In 1983, the OECD outlined what it regarded as the various handicaps of migrant children and emphasised the need for vocational education and training as not just a fix to the problem of unemployment, but to those cultural attitudes about the ‘place of work in life’ deemed so different to those of the host country,

131. The children of foreign workers… have many educational and labour market handicaps. Many of them have only completed low levels of education in their countries of origin. Some of those who have been to school in the host country perform better at school than native-born children, yet fail to get jobs. More often, they leave with no qualifications. Thus these children are more likely to be

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46 Even today, the National Library of Australia houses the Disadvantaged Schools Program (Australia) & Commonwealth Schools Commission (Australia) 1978 Disadvantaged Schools Program [discussion paper], under the subject ‘Children with social disabilities’.
unemployed or to secure jobs in decline or which have become precarious. The resolution of these practical problems raises fundamental questions about the extent to which migrants and their host countries will understand and modify their sometimes conflicting cultural practices. In addition to cultural and religious obstacles to performing well in school, or even attending school, and to work, inadequate knowledge of the language of the host country is a major handicap to seeking occupational guidance before leaving school, searching for a job, obtaining vocational education and training, and to obtaining a job. It is particularly urgent to give effective basic language training as a first step in creating new ways of organising and providing vocational education and training to people who have different cultural views about the place of work in life. (OECD, 1983, pp58-9)

Kalantzis and Cope (1984) critique this view of the ‘problem of migrants’, which they suggest can be read into the Australian Karmel Report (1973) on *Schools in Australia*, which promoted social reform through positive discrimination and equality of achievement. Kalantzis and Cope (1984, p86-7) demonstrate how its ‘understanding of the relationship between class and socio-economic disadvantage and its reform programme’ were based entirely on

…a cultural analysis of the problem of inequality: its analysis was framed in terms of a cultural deficiency/adequacy dichotomy whereby the disadvantage of class position could be remediated through a cultural fix. Successful initiation into the dominant culture simply required better teaching of skills, language and ‘the motives of conventional social success (p87).

This emphasis on the cultural analysis and ‘fix’ of the deficiencies of the social group continued to displace a genuine political examination of the way social institutions order society. The social casualty through this lens was regarded as culturally deprived, linguistically deficient and requiring significant forms of compensatory skills and language education. By the early 1980s, the non-traditional label began to be replaced by the equity label and a more formal and targeted categorisation of disadvantaged identity.

*The equity student*

On November 16, 1982 the term ‘Equity (educational opportunity)’ had entered the ERIC Digest (ERIC, 2010). Equity was a descriptor for ‘Equal Education’ which had been a feature
of the Digest since 1966. 47 ‘Equal Education’ refers to a ‘System of education extending comparable opportunities to all individuals regardless of race, colour, creed, age, sex, socioeconomic class, or ability’. Similar to the non-traditional student, the equity student was identified on the basis of social characteristics, socio-economic status, race, region, gender and type of study. The only difference was the intensifying regulatory conditions that would operate around this particular set of identities.

In 1985, the Hawke Labor Government introduced its Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP), and by the time of Dawkin’s White Paper, Higher Education: A Policy Statement (1988), universities were under increasing pressure to enrol students whose characteristics conformed to equity requirements. The White Paper stated

The larger and more diverse is the pool from which we draw our skilled workforce, the greater is our capacity to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge. The current barriers to the participation of financially and other disadvantaged groups limit our capacity to develop the highest skilled workforce possible and are a source of economic inefficiency. (Dawkins, 1988, p7).

The pressure to enrol equity students continued well into the 1990s with the publication of A Fair Chance for All (DEET, 1990a), which stated that ‘the overall objective of equity in higher education is to ensure that Australians from all groups in society have the opportunity to participate successfully in higher education’ (p2), and that ‘this will be achieved by changing the balance of the student population to reflect more closely the composition of society as a whole’ (p2).


**Related Terms:** Academic Accommodations (Disabilities); Achievement Gap; Affirmative Action; Age Discrimination; At Risk Students; Barriers; Civil Rights Legislation; Disability Discrimination; Disproportionate Representation; Educational Demand; Educational Discrimination; Educational Opportunities; Educational Quality; Educationally Disadvantaged; Excellence in Education; Gender Discrimination; Individualized Education Programs; Non-discriminatory Education; Open Enrolment; Outcome Based Education; Racial Discrimination; Reverse Discrimination; Selective Admission; Sex Fairness; Special Needs Students; Tokenism; Universal Design for Learning.

**Used For:** Educational Equality (1966 1976); Educational Equity (Opportunities); Educational Inequality; Equal Educational Opportunities; Equal Facilities (2004); Equality of Education; Equalized Facilities (2004); Equity (Educational Opportunities); Fiscal Neutrality; Universal Education (1968 1976); Wealth Neutrality.
With the *Higher Education Equity Program* and the publication of *A Fair Chance for All*, students’ socio-economic/cultural differences were petrified into equity categories through which governments could more efficiently regulate equity funding, promote targets and strategies and evaluate the performance of universities in this area. The equity categories were: People from rural and isolated areas; Women in non-traditional study (WINS); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ABTSI); People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB); People with disabilities; and People from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Low SES). These categories have remained stable as indicators of universities’ equity performance.

As an important regulatory mechanism, Dawkin’s ensuing financial reforms of the higher education sector would tie aspects of each university’s operational grants to compliance with the Government’s various agendas. In particular, the funding for the trienniums 1989-1991 (Dawkins DEET, 1988), 1990-92 (Dawkins DEET, 1990b) and 1991-93 (Baldwin DEET, 1991) were used to facilitate the reform and expansion set in motion by the *Higher Education: A Policy Statement* (DEET 1988). Setting up a more competitive funding environment, incentives to qualify for additional funding were provided through National Priority (Reserve) Funding, the Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP), the Aboriginal Participation Initiative (API), the Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (AESIP), and grants under the Early Retirement/ Redundancy Fund (DEET, 1992). By the 1991-93 triennium, institutions were not just required to report on their success in compliance to these various policy agendas, but to also provide detail of the various strategies they were employing to meet the various targets that were being set, for example, student load and equity targets. This proved to be a precise mechanism for ensuring that all institutions engaged in a type of target practice to meet the Government’s agendas of positive discrimination and the redistribution of opportunity.

Enabling disadvantaged students’ learning, language and literacy became the central targets of government activity in education as evidenced by the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) in the secondary sector and the *Higher Education Equity Program* in the tertiary sector. *A Fair Chance for All* (1990) stated explicitly the objectives and specific targets for each equity groups to provide guidelines for universities seeking ongoing and additional government funding. For People from Socio-economically Disadvantaged Backgrounds, the Objective read,
To improve the participation in higher education of people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds so that the mix of commencing students more closely resembles the mix of the general population.

The target,

All institutions to develop special entry arrangements for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups by 1992.

For People from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds, the Objective read,

To increase the participation of people from non English Speaking backgrounds who are under-represented in higher education, and
To improve the balance of participation of non English speaking background students by sex and discipline.

The target,

All institutions with a significant number of people from NESB in their catchment area to provide tertiary programs and adequate support programs by 1992.

Compliance would be attained through the implementation of Baldwin’s Relative Funding Model (1990), which required universities to demonstrate compliance for ongoing and additional funding. Compliance would be demonstrated through the educational profile required of each university and institutional performance in the four quantitative Equity Indicators: Access, Participation, Retention and Success (Ramsey, et al., 1998). The institutional imperative to facilitate students’ social, cultural and linguistic transition into the academic setting led to a wide range of educational interpretations of students’ transitional and ongoing learning needs.

v. An educational intervention for the social casualty

This section traces ‘battle lines’ (Ransom, 1997) as the discursive space for making sense of ‘Access, Participation, Retention and Success’ was increasingly regarded as an educational rather than a therapeutic consideration. In ACT-I, it was demonstrated how the counsellor and study skills teacher as agents of redemption emerged as ‘different’ to academic teachers - in the rapport developed with students, as student advocates, and as a ‘safe house’ for the under-confident and poorly skilled. In contrast, ACT-II demonstrates how learning advisors as we might recognise them today came to identify themselves: as different from counsellors by
regarding themselves as professional teachers concerned more with what students could do than how they felt; as different from study skills teachers as ‘learning skills’, literacy and language teaching came to dominate practice; and as different from educational developers whose target was the teaching academic and the curriculum, and drew heavily on the principles of phenomenography to describe student difference in terms of approaches to learning. The two key practices identified in this section are what I have come to refer to as ‘target practices’ and person-centred teaching, and an emphasis on students’ learning, language and literacy development.

Study skills – learning skills – language skills – literacy

The appearance of the ‘non-traditional student’ in higher education during the Whitlam reforms of the 1970s created a discursive and practical space for specialised fields to emerge concerned with the provision of the most appropriate educational interventions. Educational disadvantage was seen to require both a language and a skills fix. The notion of skills, however, had begun to extend beyond the behavioural notion of study skills to encapsulate a more developmental notion of learning skills, language skills, literacy skills and numeracy skills. Walkerdine (1993) and Morrs (1992) offer significant insight into the episteme of ‘developmentalism’ as a political and epistemological movement. Walkerdine (1993) suggests that well up until the 1980s, developmental psychology, as ‘grand metanarratives of science’, pervaded all thinking about child development to the point that it was impossible to think otherwise. As an object of the scientific gaze, the mapping, quantification and production of a child’s developmental characteristics, produced the norms by which difference could be diagnosed as pathology and deficiency. This could be directly transferred to thinking about student learning development at this time. As Walkerdine (1993) suggests

The rational and autonomous individual was to be produced and regulated precisely through the production of psycho-pedagogic practices designed to produce a citizen who would reason and be reasonable… the idea of reasoning as a gradual abstraction has been inscribed in the very heart of modern government. Otherness in this model could only be understood as something at a lower developmental level, further from reason and civilisation and intensely threatening because of that (p456).

This shift in the knowledge/power nexus for working with the ‘Other’ in higher education can be found in A Report on Student Services in Tertiary Education in Australia (Roe, et al.,
1982). Commissioned by the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Committee (CTEC), and involving a two year review of Student Services across all Australian universities, the Report highlighted the need to provide ‘educational, developmental and preventative’ programs which were beyond the expertise and qualifications of counsellors and psychologists. For some counsellors, this was problematic given that they had built up ‘study skills’ courses as part of their professional portfolio. For others, the need for a more specialised field in educational, language and writing skills was seen as a necessity.

Student services in its various guises, and in particular the provision of study skills, or what was more recently being referred to as ‘learning skills’, had become a feature of the higher education context. In 1982, the Report found that all 18 universities offered some form of study skills program or service and the majority of these were offered through counselling services. It found that students and staff favoured the expansion of student ‘self-help services’, but student services staff recommended ‘a shift away from the pressing problems of individuals towards educational/ developmental/ preventative programs’ (p.iv).

With increasing student diversity, a broader reach was seen to be required. Citing a study in one large university, Frederick, et al. (1981) suggested that the large majority of students and staff agreed that: 1. students needed help in acquiring the necessary ‘learning skills; 2. universities had a responsibility for providing learning skills assistance although it reported that junior staff tended to agree more with the latter than senior staff; and 3. that these services needed to be improved and expanded. The question for these practitioners was ‘who would be responsible for delivering this service? And where should it be located?’

Given that student services was said to have emerged as a ‘remedial’ service, there was some doubt as to whether this was the right location for a program aspiring to be ‘educational, developmental and preventative’. On the one hand, counsellors had already been seen to be doing this work, but it was argued that they were trained in psychology, and worked generally in a reactive, remedial way with individual problems (Frederick, et al., 1980, p108). While their expertise and training for the delivery of general study skills (‘memory/concentration, motivation, relaxation/ stress management’) was beyond question, the shift to offer more practical, ‘educational skills’, such as essay/ assignment writing, organisation of time, reading and note-taking, ‘were not so obviously related to counsellors expertise’ (p108).
The growing recognition of a need for an educational program as a developmental and preventative measure indicates a specialised space that is ‘up for grabs’. What we see emerging here is an opening for a specialised field of practice to surface in the provision of educational skills assistance for all students. This is also an historical and discursive space where we are able to witness the chance and inconsistent splitting off of student learning assistance from counselling; and the bifurcation of learning assistance practitioners from teaching development practitioners. This particular splitting apart owes much to the emerging phenomenographic movement which would come to dominate thinking about higher education research for the next thirty years, and coined the term ‘learning skills’ which is still commonly drawn upon today. For those already operating in the messy field of learning assistance, the term ‘learning skills’ was beginning to replace ‘study skills’ as a means to indicate the shift in thinking about student learning assistance from a psychological perspective to a more ‘educational and developmental perspective’. Learning skills was in fact a term put into play by a loose group of educational researchers who were part of the emerging phenomenographic or ‘learning to learn’ movement (eg. John Bowden, Paul Ramsden, John Biggs).

To locate the proximity of the phenomenographic movement to the findings and recommendations of the Roe Report, it is important to note that the Roe Report drew heavily upon the findings and opinions of those involved in a similar report for the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CHSE) at the University of Melbourne the year before. The CHSE at the time included John Bowden, a recent convert to the phenomenographic movement, who would be responsible for the secondment of Paul Ramsden\(^48\) from the UK in 1984 to provide professional advice and leadership in the area of phenomenography (Bowden, 1986). Together they would champion the phenomenography movement in Australia. Prior to Ramsden’s arrival, however, the CSHE had trialled its own Learning Skills Program between 1978 and 1980. It had also conducted its own study of Student Services on request for the University Academic Board. The final report, from which the Roe Report drew some of its

\(^{48}\) Paul Ramsden is one of the leading scholars in the area of phenomenographic research in higher education, who after his secondment to the University of Melbourne, transformed the teaching and learning unit at the University of Sydney, and later went on to be the founding Chief Executive of the UKs Higher Education Academy from 2004-2009. More information available at [http://paulramsden48.wordpress.com/biography/](http://paulramsden48.wordpress.com/biography/)
own evidence, entitled *Learning Skills: A Review of Need and Services to University Students* (Frederick, et al., 1981), found that

Helping students to become more effective in their learning is not simply a matter of better ‘study techniques’ or passing rather than failing an examination; it is concerned to help them broaden their repertoire of skills to grapple with the whole complex range of tasks involved in university education. (p3)

In this report, students were said to vary in a number of significant ways – intellectual ability, study habits and patterns, attitudes to education, expectations, beliefs and values, and motivation – and this had a direct impact on their approach to learning. Because, it was suggested, ‘every student has a unique profile, based on family, school and social environments as well as on genes, and his or her approach to learning’ (p5), the university had a responsibility to assure that students were encouraged to build the repertoire of skills and be successful.

In order to distance itself from the previous quantitative educational research, the Report critiques past methods suggesting its ‘empirical, measurement-oriented approach of research on learning [ie. memory, perception, cognition]’ led to a ‘limited view of learning in which the ‘outcome’ was viewed in measurable outcomes of knowledge input and output (Frederick, et al., 1981, p5). Instead, this new movement promoted qualitative research in a naturalistic setting. 1979 was a big year for the ‘learning to learn’ movement as they produced a new wave of research (and methodology) to student learning and marked the shift, at the higher education level at least, away from psycho-metrics towards phenomenography.

This is not to say that counsellors did not continue to have a role. The insights gained from working with students had led some counsellors to believe that student learning problems

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50 The Fourth International Conference on Higher Education at Lancaster in 1978 saw 19 papers on student learning presented which were then published in the 1979 *Higher Education* journal where ‘the two approaches were discussed in an integrative way, showing that there has been a major shift in both the research methodology and the theoretical assumptions about the nature of student learning’ (p7).
were not to do with ‘study skills deficits’ at all (Frederick, et al., 1981, p7). Citing studies which had found that the study skills packages emerging from the US ‘were simply not enough’ (Bligh51, 1979 in Frederick, et al., 1981, p6), Bligh’s ‘comprehensive review of 261 publications on the evaluation of study methods and habits…[found] consensus amongst both learning skills counsellors and researchers that effective tertiary level learning is the result of complex interactions between intellectual and personality variables. Of these, skills training (as in reading, note-taking, memorising) is only one part’ (p6). The emphasis had to be on the creation of meaning. The shift in the focus of research was not on testing functions of the mind, but on understanding the complexities of student learning approaches, ‘study as a personal concern’.

According to this view, students need to be competent in: active listening and note-taking, participating in tutorials and practical sessions, research reading, assignment writing, learning and remembering, managing time, pacing study, preparing for examinations, making decisions, managing uncertainty, dealing with anxiety and tension, managing relationships (Frederick, et al., 1981, p11). And a learning skills program would have two responsibilities:

a duty to help students with their individual learning difficulties on one hand and an equally important second responsibility to work cooperatively with members of the teaching staff on the other. (p12)

Despite its claims, this shift did not necessarily mark a shift away from the deficit discourse. Research still concerned itself with ‘measurement of aspects of students’ behaviour, attitudes, habits and patterns…the use of inventories, questionnaires and similar devices can systematically look at trends and themes related to how students learn and can be useful diagnostic tools to help identify ‘areas of deficit’ (Entwistle, 1978 in Frederick, et al., 1981, p7).

From within the learning advising field, Taylor, who was trained as a linguist, was highly critical of the phenomenographic movement. In his paper, The notion of skills: an

51 Bligh, D. (1979) An interim report to the University of Exeter, Teaching Services Unit, University of Exeter, UK.
Hermeneutical Perspective (1990), Taylor critiques the phenomenographic approach for its ‘total failure to admit issues about language to disciplined consideration’ (p56) when ‘most academic learning has less to do with understanding the realities of life than with understanding the language of the discipline’ (p57). He attributes this oversight to the fact that those engaged in phenomenography are not language specialists. His most incisive critique, however, is the way he points to phenomenography’s ‘apparent equivocation of discipline skills and propositional knowledge’ (p52) and what he regards as their subsequent belief that by ‘bringing to students' conscious attention of how best to learn’ (p62), students are able to become more skilled in learning. He argues that learning occurs through language, not knowledge about skill necessarily, and argues for more attention to the work of Halliday and systemic functional linguistics to inform our work.

Simultaneous to the emergence of the phenomenographic and learning skills movement was the proliferation of socio-linguistic research for explaining student difference. From the broader field of socio-linguistics, the seeming ‘ineducability’ of the working class became widely interpreted as a problem of inadequate socialisation into the elaborated linguistic codes favoured by the education system (eg. Bernstein, 1977; Poole, 1976), which for social reproduction theorists tended to represent the linguistic and cultural hegemony of the ruling class (eg. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This opened a space for critical and humanist discourses that were concerned with ‘making a difference’ to enter the field of learning assistance in higher education. It also created a space for multiple interpretations of learning advising to take hold.

Writing in Australia, but drawing on the sociolinguistic work of Bernstein, Millicent Poole (1976) prefaced her book with the following:

Perhaps it is possible that linguistic deficiency could be a factor in the non-realisation of individual potential at the tertiary level, especially if language ability relates to cognition and the development of abstract conceptualisation….Perhaps these linguistic deficiencies noted in university students are partly due to socio-cultural factors. (p2)

This idea is not new. Students’ language competence had long been a peripheral concern around student failure, but it is here that the sociolinguist becomes endowed with a privileged role in explaining difference in the academy. Poole’s study goes on to examine the language of working class and middle class university students to ‘determine differences in verbal
coding behaviour for oral and written communication’ (p3). These kinds of studies are critiqued by Cate Poynton and Bernstein himself. Troubled with the way his theoretical models of language were being used, Bernstein (1977) insisted that the notion of ‘restricted codes’ was not synonymous with linguistic and cultural deprivation. And yet, as Poynton (1997) explains, sociolinguistics is deeply implicated in the perpetuation of these assumptions.

Poynton (1997) critiques the use and perpetuation of ‘social categories as explanations for certain kinds of difference’ suggesting that for practitioners who view language as a social practice, difference is necessarily explained through the analysis of social variables. The problem occurs when social categories come to be treated as ‘real things’ and their relationships interpreted as causal. Here attention is drawn to the use of statistical correlation and the social constructedness of the relationships it establishes by labelling one variable ‘independent’ and the other ‘dependent’. The directionality that this labelling establishes then allows for the misrecognition of a casual relationship. Poyton stresses the historical, institutionally-specific and performative nature of social categories, urging all researchers to do their own genealogies on their origins and how they came to be used.

Returning to Poole’s study, however, her efforts to differentiate the language utilisation of middle and working class students found that the cumulative deficiency of the working class home environment on students’ language utilisation at the tertiary level was most evident in verbal communication, and therefore, concluded that schools may be required to focus more on teaching ‘expressional skills’ rather than vocabulary, comprehension and reading (p155). In her view, language deficiency required more explicit teaching of grammar.

For the cultural ethnographers and anthropologists, more grammar teaching would not be of much help given the culturally specific nature of language used inside disciplines. For these practitioners, the problem was not retarded language development, but a problem of literacy conformity (Bock & Lewit, 1984; Nightingale, 1988; Taylor, 1978). From this perspective, students required assistance with their acculturation to the disciplinary conventions, its particular epistemologies and modes of expression. And yet, this particular picture of language was a marginal one. From an institutional perspective, language deficiency required more grammar teaching. Not surprisingly then, Monash appointed a remedial grammar
teacher in 1974 (Taylor, 2008) and La Trobe, a remedial literacy teacher in its Humanities Faculty in 1979 (Bock, 1986).

The publication of *Literacy by Degrees* in 1988 by five of the field’s pioneers (Brigid Ballard, Gordon Taylor, John Clanchy, Hanne Bock & Peggy Nightingale) marks the threshold moment for the learning advising community as we recognise it today. From a socio-linguistic, philosophical and cultural perspective, this could be regarded as a seminal text for the contemporary learning advisor. *Literacy by Degrees* marks the shift in thinking about student learning support from the psycho-social / behavioural perspective to the socio-linguistic / socio-cultural perspective. Informed by the language and literacy research emerging from the UK (Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1982; Street, 1984) and Australia (Halliday, 1985), literacy as a political, theoretical and philosophical endeavour dominates thinking about managing difference and productive deficit in the academy and society at large.

Despite this language and cultural orientation, the ‘learning skills’ tag continues to have currency in the field of learning advising today. Take, for example, the job advertisement in March 2010 for a Learning Skills Advisor at Monash University. This advertisement is for a general staff member to take up the part-time position of Learning Skills Advisor, in the Learning Skills Unit, as part of the Client Services, Humanities and Social Sciences, Monash University Library. Positioned as part of the service provision offered by the Library, ‘Learning Skills Advisers report to the Manager, Learning Skills and are members of a team that is responsible for the provision of a range of generic, discipline specific and integrated learning skills programs and supporting materials’ (Ransom, 2008). For some within the field, the ‘Monash experience’ of being made general staff and forced to teach learning skills in the library has been regarded as a major setback to the profession (Clerehan, 2007).

**The role of person-centred teaching**

Whether we regard our work as teaching learning skills, language, literacy or numeracy, learning advising practices today continue to be strongly influenced by the notion of person-centred teaching as a means of attending to differences originating in the student. Indeed, it was the individual consultation and the focus that this practice allowed the practitioner to take that was used to differentiate the learning advisor from the educational developer at this time.
A clear perspective on this came from John Clanchy, a former counsellor, now study skills advisor at the Australian National University. Contributing to the report from Frederick, et al. (1981), which was mentioned above and used to inform the Roe Report (1982) the following year, Clanchy’s findings from a review of practice in the US and the UK in 1980 were used to suggest that the increasingly popular resource-based approach in the form of packages and kits would not be effective for assisting student learning (Clanchy, 1980 cited in Frederick, et al., 1981, p7). Consistent with Clanchy’s views, it was suggested that a highly personalised approach was the best solution:

The more effective method seems to be to offer individual and group counselling where students have the opportunity to explore in depth in a safe climate the particular combination of difficulties they are experiencing. (cited in Frederick, et al., 1981, p15)

Whereas the phenomenographers, who would take on the role of educational and curriculum developers, were concerned with promoting improved pedagogy and learning design, learning advisors would continue to be positioned, and would largely position themselves, as a personalised educational service providing a safe space for students to ask questions regarding learning skills and academic literacy.

This point was made clear again at the Marysville Symposium (Bowden, 1986b) for educational researchers, where phenomenographers and learning advisors came together in what Bowden (1986b) described as the

…interface between the work of educational researchers and the activities of learning skills advisors and others who assist tertiary students to improve their learning. An interplay of theory and practice if you like. It is worth remarking that current educational researchers of various kinds are now investigating the real-life learning situation directly and are developing methodologies, theories and applications to practice in a coherent system which has all the hallmarks of a genuine discipline. (p3)

In contrast to the majority voice at this symposium, Hanne Bock, in her paper, *Phenomenography: orthodoxy and innovation or innovation and orthodoxy?*, suggested that while ‘the phenomenographic approach is a welcome and belated counter to behavioursitic views of the learning process’ (p95), it had little bearing on the work of the learning advisor whose focus is on the complexities of the individual student and their negotiation of the task
According to Bock, learning advisors deal with the fall-out of the most intelligently planned courses, suggesting that we work with problems that originate in the students’ negotiation of the curriculum. We teach language through content, and work with students across a range of disciplines from a wide range of ‘educational, social, cultural and religious backgrounds’ (p97) - backgrounds that 'have considerable influence on the formation of paradigms for learning and for this reason are likely to determine a large part of the difficulties the student will encounter’ (p97). For these practitioners, the job was far more a case of cultural mediation, assisting students with literacy conformity (Bock & Gassin, 1982), than the remediation of a literacy deficit.

These ideas are similar to that of Ballard and Clanchy writing around the same time. According to Clanchy (1982).

The model we have evolved of a small advisory unit, working cooperatively with both students and academic staff, offering highly individualised tuition and seeking to develop students' cognitive, writing and study skills within disciplinary contexts, is effective, practicable and relatively inexpensive. (p26)

Those concerned with working with staff and the curriculum would move into the field of academic development. Language and literacy would remain peripheral as a problem to be solved with the individual student.

Over a decade later, Ballard (1994) would continue to emphasise what she regarded as the ‘integrative role of the learning advisor’ in the face of what was appearing to be a socio-linguistic tendency of replacing the student with academic discourse as the locus of knowledge and practice,

I would argue that our primary professional focus is, and must remain, the student rather than academic discourses or academic disciplines. Primarily, but not
exclusively, we focus on the needs of the student as a learner and an increasingly sophisticated critical thinker and communicator. And, because this influences the evolution of these qualities, the student as a complex person with individual values, needs and behaviours. (Ballard, 1994, p17)

Ballard’s point here was a warning that a singular focus on working with staff, the curriculum or academic discourse alone would be taking a part for the whole.

Chanock (1995), who today continues to champion person-centred teaching in the learning advising field, has written about the influence of Rogerian theory and person-centred counselling on learning advising practice. Her paper makes a clear and considered distinction between academic skills teaching and counselling.

The counsellor then is working with the client’s knowledge of herself, whereas the academic skills teacher is more likely to work with the students’ knowledge of institutional expectations and disciplinary cultures. (p32)

Chanock’s point is that like person-centred counselling, the individual consultation is centred in a relationship that can promote learning, and that ‘there is a good deal in the literature on therapy which can help us to understand how the intellectual companionship we offer students enables them to learn more effectively’ (p34).

The professional commitment to individual consultations was demonstrated in the 1996 LAS Conference Proceedings, *What do we learn from teaching one-to-one that informs our work with large numbers?* (Chanock, et al., 1996), where learning advisors located the individual consultation at the centre of their insight and expertise in the academy. Today, the individual consultation is a widely employed practice among learning advisors as can be seen in the AALL Benchmarking project\(^5\) data from 2007.

**Target practice for equity students**

The second key practice that emerged under these conditions were the range of transitional practices targeting specific social groups, the imperatives for which came out of the Dawkin’s

\(^5\) AALL Benchmarking data  www.all.org.au
reforms and were reinforced well into the 1990s. Defined as a problem of economic, social and cultural disadvantage, students were considered ‘educationally handicapped’ and in need of a wide of range of economic, educational and social incentives. The educational strategies suggested in A Fair Chance for All (1990) included for low SES students, ‘bridging and supplementary support programs’ (p17); for Aboriginal students, ‘bridging programs’ and ‘Aboriginal support units’ (p21); for women, ‘bridging programs’, ‘curriculum review and development’ and ‘flexible course arrangements’ (p27); for NESB students, ‘adequate support programs’ to ‘help overcome language difficulties and cultural differences’ (p37), and the list continues.

Universities from 1988 onwards engaged heavily in targeted outreach, access and support strategies to meet their equity targets. Some examples, which are cited in a 1998 HEC/DETYA Report (Ramsey, Tranter, Charlton, & Sumner, 1998) include Monash University’s Special Access Scheme, which began in 1986. This scheme targeted low SES and rural/isolated students, offering outreach and access activities that linked in with the Government’s Disadvantaged Schools Program. It also included support strategies, such as an orientation program, monitoring and reporting of student progress and referrals to specific support services. Another cited example was the UNSW ACCESS Program which began in 1987 and offered a targeted access and support program, including an orientation program dealing with academic, administrative and social aspects of study, to applicants with financial and language difficulties.

A review of the Resource implications of the introduction of good strategies in higher education for disadvantaged students by the Higher Education Council (HEC, 1994) found in regard to learning assistance centres that

Learning assistance centres provide a range of services of an educational nature…Staff are professional teachers….Learning assistance centres may sponsor tutoring individually or in small groups, either by a staff member or under a peer tutoring scheme. In addition, the learning assistance centre may offer preparatory or bridging courses for educationally disadvantaged people who are ineligible for direct university entrance. Other activities may include orientation sessions for disadvantaged student

\[\text{53 Department for Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), Commonwealth of Australia}\]
groups such as mature aged women and students from non English speaking backgrounds (HEC, 1994, p147) (*emphasis* added)

The importance of targeted practices was found again in the 1998 DETYA Report, which stated

Support programs for Low SES, rural and isolated students need to be tailored to the specific requirements of these students. …While Low SES, rural and isolated students share many of the same characteristics and have many needs in common, support services must be able to recognise and respond to the particular requirements of each group and, of course, of the individuals within each group. For example, Low SES students are more likely to encounter difficulties with conflict between study and pressure from family and friends or part time work commitments, whereas rural and isolated students are more likely to experience social isolation and loneliness being distant from support networks.

Student support, both specialist and mainstream, is a vital component of targeted access programs for students from Low SES, and from rural and isolated backgrounds. Good support programs will help produce successful and satisfied students and graduates, some of whom will return to their home communities and provide the best possible outreach for new school leavers from these communities. This, in turn, will help to build a longer term shift in perceptions of higher education within these communities and a broadening representation of the Australian population enrolled at and graduating from universities. (Ramsey, et al., 1998, p74)

Implicit in these strategy suggestions is the notion of ‘single or multiple educational disadvantage’ (HEC, 1994, pxii) and a strong emphasis on the need for compensatory and transitional educational practices in order to ‘make a difference’ to the educationally disadvantaged. It is in this environment that the field of learning advising grew out of existing counselling, study skills and remedial English practices to assist the university in meeting its ‘educational’ obligations to equity students within an increasingly regulated environment. Not surprisingly then, by 1990 all universities had some form of student learning assistance (Samelowicz, 1990).

vi. Correspondence to the present

‘...it is important to develop good literacy skills which go beyond university...students need to know that mastering many different discourses is extremely empowering.’

AALL President (Barthel, 2007)

The correspondence to the present returns the reader to the voices of the present in order to identify how elements of ACT-II can be recognised in our discursive complexity and contribute to learning advising as a contested space in the academy. Returning to a key point first raised in ‘Correspondence to the present’ of ACT-I (p110), learning advisors can be seen to have emerged and continue to occupy the physical and psychological space between staff and students in a mass education environment. In ACT-I, the mediation role of the learning advisor was shown to have a therapeutic function for the individual and the ailing institution by occupying the physical and psychological space between students and staff in a ‘mass education’ environment. The corresponding practices offered a personalised relational approach (a safe space and a familiar face) to ameliorate the alienating effects of the impersonal university. In this ACT, the mediation role takes on an educational dimension (literacy and language teaching) that: locates itself between student understanding and the expectations of the disciplines; and seeks to ameliorate the alienating effects of the epistemologies and writing conventions of the academy and the disciplines.

This section will draw attention to the way in which traces of the emergences, events and truths that came to the fore in ACT-II are visible aspects of the discursive complexity of the learning advisor in the present. The learning advisor as educational intervention for the social casualty will be shown to persist in: the continued identification of the ‘non-traditional student’ and the socio-cultural diagnosis of difference; the framing of learning advising work as mediating students’ cultural transition into the academy and disciplines; the tension between literacy/language perspectives and the study skills/learning skills paradigms in the field; the way that learning advisors differentiate themselves from discipline academics and educational developers as a means for carving out their identity in the academy; and the fact that learning advisors continue to regard themselves as professional teachers. What is continuous between ACT-I and ACT-II is the way the ethical agency of the learning advisor, particularly in relation to person-centred practices, is deeply influenced by the redemptive qualities fostered in humanist and critical discourses.
This ACT introduces an important aspect of the discursive complexity of the learning advisor in the present: that is, the persistence of the socio-cultural diagnosis of difference for making sense of our work combined with its disavowal as a meaningful and useful frame for thinking about student learning in the academy. Bringing the various characteristics of the ‘non-traditional student’ to life in the present, one learning advisor suggested,

…more and more students from different backgrounds are coming in, international students from English speaking as well as non-English speaking countries, including countries where the education system is very different. …You are getting more and more students from sections of Australian society whose parents didn’t ever go to university, so who don’t have the background in academic awareness and academic culture; both from, first and second generation Australians to new Australians of multiple different cultural backgrounds. And you’re also getting a range of people coming to university from different age groups as well. You are also getting a lot of students who are, may have done a degree before but are coming and doing a Masters’ programme in a different area so they’re jumping academic cultures. (16)

From this statement, it is clear to see how ethnicity, culture, age, experience and social status all continue to count as socio-cultural differences in the student population that might justify our existence. However, the ‘othering’ inherent in the label of ‘non-traditional’ is also regarded as having limited salience in the academy today, as another learning advisor argues

… if you think about the original construct of [learning advising] starting in the 80s with all those reports, where there was a recognition that some students had not been very well-prepared to come to tertiary education … well, that still is the case. But I don't believe that we are dealing with the ‘non-traditional’ student because that was thirty years ago. Like, we are now 2000 and whatever....we can't still be saying ‘we are not having non-traditional students’ because these are the students. (6)

This learning advisor’s comment suggests that all students today are ‘non-traditional’ in one sense or another. Students’ socio-cultural differences, it seems, might simply be taken for granted. And yet, learning advisors recognise that the attendant labelling of students as ‘non-traditional’ can be counter-productive:

…you have to be very open. You shouldn’t have preconceived ideas about any group of students, however you wish to categorise them, whether you categorise them as international students or mature age students or…. undergraduate or postgraduate or whatever… again, not making assumptions about their background, not making assumptions about what they know. (2)
Part of the suspicion about how student difference is categorised is directly related to how ‘appropriate’ interventions are subsequently conceived. Ironically, the assumptions of deficit and remediation that surround the ‘learning needs’ of the non-traditional student are also recognised as the very justification for our existence. As one learning advisor admitted, ‘we wouldn’t have jobs if our unis weren’t thinking in terms of remedial…’ (3). The remedial English teacher employed at Monash in 1974 (Taylor, 2008) and the remedial literacy teacher at La Trobe in 1984 (Bock, 1986) are evidence of our ‘unsavoury’ origins (Foucault, 1977a).

The stammering found in the remedial-developmental divide in our work has its traces in the rupture between ACT-I and ACT-II. At the heart of it is the ‘othering’ that occurs, and what learning advisors continue to rail against, when student learning needs ‘are placed into a skills basket rather than an intellectual exchange basket’ (3); that is, when individual students are diagnosed as remedial cases rather than recognised as individuals making the difficult intellectual and cultural transition into the disciplines of the academy: one focuses on the lack in the individual, the other focuses on the interaction between a complex individual and a complex learning environment. This latter perspective is derived from the cultural lens that interprets cultural difference not as emanating from the student alone, but as inherent to the academy and the disciplines themselves. From cultural ethnographic and socio-linguistic perspectives, the disciplines are regarded as specific sub-cultural environments that challenge notions of knowledge, identity and voice, as one learning advisor suggests:

I think there has been a lot of work done on identity and voice and writing and I think that’s getting a bit too absorbed or too focused on the individual. Because the individual is entering a situation over which they have no control, so they may have a voice and a sense of who they are, but they are hitting culture and a very strange one but one that also pre-exists so you can’t – the idea of an individual voice in that type of culture is for me very hard to conceptualise or to help students develop. (13)

Accordingly, the disciplines are regarded as posing different cultural literacy demands on students that challenge their ability to think and write well in the full range of contexts they find themselves. And despite the arguments against generic skills workshops, it can also be suggested that when done well, these kinds of cross-disciplinary workshops provide students with ‘a cross-cultural perspective’ (14).
From this viewpoint, it is possible to see how learning advisors recognise themselves as cultural mediators (3), helping students from diverse ‘backgrounds’ and ‘abilities’ (1,2,3,7,9, 10,12,13,15,16) manage the ‘transition’ (13,14,15,16) into the particular ‘discourses’ (4,6,7,8, 11,12,14,15) and ‘expectations’ (4,7,9,11,13,15,16) of the academy and the disciplines. One learning advisor refers to this role as a ‘culture broker’ because

…we have a close insight into students’ thinking and the conditions of their work, and at the same time, an insight into lecturers thinking and their conditions of work. We are in a position to mediate and explain in both directions – explain each group to the other. (3)

Another referred to it as a ‘bridge’

…between students, many of whom are coming from backgrounds where they haven’t got much familiarity with the requirements of Australian universities, and staff who haven’t got a great understanding of university students. (9)

For another learning advisor, however, it is less a relationship with staff and more a relationship with the student and a mediation between knowledge and learning,

This fits in with my understanding of academic skills’ advisers, of being part of a mediating space between academic knowledge and student learning. (16)

As shown in ACT-II, the educational/ cultural turn in learning advising work was accompanied by a shift in thinking about the learning advisor as professional teachers rather than counsellors, whose role might be described as something between ‘tutor and mentor’ (10). The notion of learning advisor as tutor has some historical significance. In one unit that began in the 1970s, learning advisors were called tutors, and because the role had become stigmatised as ‘remedial teaching’, there was no career path beyond Senior Tutor (1). Today, learning advisors regard their identity as a professional teacher as something that makes us distinct and useful in the academy. For example, one learning advisor said ‘I think it is the word teacher. That is the big difference between us and most of the academic staff. We are teachers’ (2). Another placed a great deal of emphasis on the difference professional teachers can make, saying

Teachers have a very powerful role in students lives, you know, they can unlock their potential, and teaching means – educare – means to lead out – so you get a student
who is fumbling or floundering and you guide them... by clarifying things for them, and they can make big progress or small steps. (4)

However, although we might all agree we are teachers, the kind of language we use to identify ourselves and the kind of teaching we do is far less clear. For example, today we might prefer to be called ‘advisors’ or ‘lecturers’ although the word ‘lecturer’ can only be legitimately used by those with academic status. For those who have general status, ‘advisor’ or ‘specialist’ might be used.

Either way, the use of ‘advisor’ is highly contentious. At least three of my interview participants questioned why I would be using such a ‘backward’ term. One argued that her title is a language and learning lecturer, not an advisor:

If it was like consultant it would make more sense. If it has got that ring of providing support and counselling, I don’t relate to that at all. I’m not giving advice. Do you know what I mean? I didn’t really relate to that because I don’t see myself as giving advice. I see myself as a teacher and have been for 20 years, as a language teacher and a linguist and interested in language research. (12)

This is in contrast, however, with a learning advisor who has general status and who argues that

We are not language advisors at all. We’re learning advisors... I’m not very happy with the word advisor, specialist is better for me. Or learning skills specialist. (15)

This begins to bring into relief the layers of the various understandings of learning advising knowledge and work. Here we see layers of meaning in the naming of the work; for example, general tutor, learning skills specialist or language teacher, providing advice to students on how to learn, write and communicate in the academy. These understandings do not represent identical meanings: they conjure nuanced variations of the learning advisor into existence.

Despite the ontological variations, the humanist and critical traditions or discourses are a common trace element in the learning advising narrative. These discourses mark learning advising as an educational intervention with a person-centred approach, a commitment to social justice and the belief that everyone can learn if given the right opportunities. This is evident in comments, such as,
I suppose it is the basic philosophy that no-one is beyond help. That is definitely part of my philosophy - that if you can just find the way into a student's heart, into the student’s mind, if you can just find the right key to unlock whatever the mystery is for them, that they will go ahead and do really well, … but that underlying belief that all students are capable of doing all things, of doing really, really well. (2)

One learning advisor emphasised the moral dimension of learning advising practices be they therapeutic or educational, or both.

I think there’s a moral dimension to it because if we are going to accept students …into the university and we’d say you met all our entry requirements, you’ve qualified to be a candidate at this university, then we have a moral imperative to ensure that we provide the wherewithal. Not to pass them when they don’t deserve to be passed, but to create the conditions of learning that enable them to, all things being equal, be reasonably successful, if not be masterfully successful. I think when I came in ‘93, there was a sense in which, particularly for international students, they were expected to just sink or swim. They weren’t inducted in any way… So I think there is a moral dimension to it and there’s a sense in which too that there’s some partnership learning. I mean it’s not like learning has occurred with just one person. Any parent will tell you that there a range of formative relationships that occur that enable a child to look at life in a particular way. It’s the same with uni. The lecturer, sure, they’re pretty critical, but it’s also the ways in which students engage with other professionals on campus in order to maximise their learning. I think it’s a moral issue. I think it’s also how can students learn if they don’t know how? If we’re going to accept them into uni we have to teach them how. Some people do that quite well, lecturers do that quite well, academics do that quite well, others don’t and they don’t know how to do it. If you’re looking for quality or excellence in learning, students need to know how to learn and how to achieve better. (14)

Making a difference, ‘enabling’ (7,12,13,14,15) and ‘empowering’ (5,11,13,14) students at the individual level is still highly regarded within the field, because, as one learning advisor emphasises, ‘…teaching should be empowering rather than taking power away from someone’ (14). The power differential between the learning advisor as agent of redemption and the student is an important concept. Even with an educational rather than therapeutic approach, it is argued that ‘a good adviser is not a gate keeper and we can’t be gate keepers’ (14).

It is easy to see how the learning advisor as professional teacher as ‘agent of redemption’ considers she has done a good job when she has been able ‘to make a difference’ (10). For learning advisors who identify with this particular dimension of learning advising, it is their
work at the individual level where they feel they can make the most significant difference. As one learning advisor stated

…that’s my purpose, my vision if you like as an academic skills’ adviser to make a difference at the individual level. (16)

Similarly, another learning advisor stated

…there is so much in one to one with students. I think it is there that we can have a huge transforming influence. I think we can make a big difference to individual students’ lives and that that is really worth doing. And all the expertise we have we can use in that whereas it gets a bit more dissipated when you try to reach more people. (3)

In summary, this section has demonstrated both agreement and cacophony in relation to the learning advisor as ‘agent of redemption’ in the present. On the one hand, the socio-cultural diagnosis of student difference - a student’s ‘background’ - persists in explaining the need for learning advisors while the idea of the ‘non-traditional student’ may appear to have lost its salience. The cultural prognosis of student learning problems persists in the emphasis on literacy and language and the explanation that the learning advisor provides students with the wherewithal to make the cultural transition into the university and their disciplines. The agent of redemption is alive and well in the understanding of the learning advisor as student advocate, providing a safe space for students to make errors and learn from them. Here the learning advisor experiences a duty of care towards the students and a penchant for person-centred practices: we listen actively, ask questions to seek clarification, and provide guidance that recognises the student as a whole. As the agent of redemption, we find ourselves different to counsellors in that we are professional teachers, and different to academic development in that our work is concerned with the student as a complex learner. As agent of redemption, our ethical agency is framed in terms of the university’s moral obligation to work with student difference in the academy, and to work with the personal and intellectual integrity of the student.
ACT-II Summary

In summary, ACT-II locates the emergence of the educational dimension of the learning advising in the socio-cultural diagnosis of student learning problems that were the result of the convergence of hard social liberal political reason and the historical, political economic imperatives for creating social cohesion. As universities began to open their doors to a more ‘non-traditional’ cohort of students in the name of social equity, the learning advisor developed an academic face to enable the students’ transition into the academic and disciplinary demands being made on them. Today, traces of this particular constitution of the learning advisor can be found in the way that learning advisors recognise themselves as professional teachers, located somewhere between the student and the demands of writing and thinking in the discipline, offering personalised and small group services to a diverse body of students.
Chapter Four summary: the agent of redemption, disciplining difference, regulating normality

Chapter Four demonstrates how the moral agency of the learning advisor as ‘agent of redemption’ emerged out of the broader political reason of social liberalism that is concerned with the discipline of difference as the primary goal of government. The two ACTS in this chapter trace the surface of this political rationality identifying a rupture in the discursive framing of student academic performance from a psycho-social diagnosis of difference requiring a therapeutic intervention to a socio-cultural diagnosis requiring an educational intervention.

In *ACT-I*, it was shown how in the initial period of expanding higher education, the governmental focus on the university as a key socialising and mobilising institution saw the problem of academic wastage and student failure emerge as a national crisis. From the 1940s, the fields of psychology and later functional sociology had come to function as the major intellectual technologies of government and with their focus on pathology sought to explain the problem of student difference as a consequence of the psycho-social characteristics of the individual student and their families. Student failure was understood as a problem of intellectual ability, maladjustment, motivation and preparation, all of which were understood as originating from the students’ family and school background. This representation framed the object of intervention as ‘a psychological subjectivity with social determinants’ (Rose, 1999, p265), and the solution as a therapeutic intervention for ‘the academic casualty’. In this period, counselling units and other ‘non-academic’ helping services were established (Frederick, 1974) – as general insurance against failure - to assist individuals and their families cope with personal problems and improve study habits.

In *ACT-II*, it was shown that while the idiom and ethos of political reason shifted from equality of opportunity as conservative egalitarianism (meritocracy) to the more radical positive discrimination (equity), the ethical agency of the learning advisor as salvation for the individual student, and also for the ailing institution, remain unchanged – it is only the nature of the diagnosis and intervention that changed. By the mid 1970s, a significant rupture in the representation of student difference occurred: it shifted from a pathology emanating from the student-family relationship to a cultural disadvantage emanating from the student-economy relationship (Arnot, 2002). The psycho-social representation of intellectual ability and
maladjustment began to be displaced by the socio-cultural representation of disadvantage and ‘educational handicap’. This development emerged at the peak of the welfare state out of the convergence of multiple political, theoretical and philosophical influences, such as social justice movements, social and cultural theory and neo-marxist critiques of social reproduction in education. Whereas higher education had been largely restricted, at least rhetorically, to those from the ‘limited pool of ability’, access to higher education, at least notionally, became the right of all under-represented social groups. Adapting Rose’s (1999) words, the object of intervention became a social subjectivity with cultural determinants – the non-traditional and equity student. And while such a shift was arguably progressive, it simply served to relocate the pathology of difference from the home to the social group, from the maladjusted psychology of the individual to the material, cultural and linguistic handicap of social background.

With pathology prevailing as the pole around which intervention would be warranted, diagnosis and remediation continued to be the call of the day. What is significant for the learning advisor is that the management of difference was increasingly understood as an educational rather than a psychological problem; that is, with the deficiency now largely understood as educational disadvantage due to socio-cultural background, student learning assistance began to develop an academic face. For example, where student failure was once related to the anti-intellectual attitude of the family, it was now related to the linguistic and cultural deficiency of the student’s cultural group. Where an unmotivated student once required counselling to protect them from the harmful attitudes of the home, now motivation could be inspired through the acquisition of empowering academic and linguistic skills: the successful student would be produced, not just through counselling and non-academic helping services, but through remedial literacy and learning development. Thus, slowly and unevenly, educational practitioners came to replace the psychologists in attending to academic student learning issues: a redemptive, albeit educational, intervention for the ‘non-traditional student’ and ‘equity’ student.

At the broadest level, the emergence of the learning advisor as a ‘language and learning professional’ can be understood as contingent on the shift in the diagnosis and representation of difference in the academy, from psycho-social to socio-cultural, whose (re)mediation, adaptation or transition required a particular kind of educational intervention – learning skills, literacy and language. In addition to the motivational and anxiety-related study problems that
could be attended to through counselling, the socio-cultural diagnosis of educational disadvantage developed a distinct literacy flavour.

The rupture identified in this Chapter, however, does not count as an entire displacement; all traces remain in the academic psyche today. As the agents of redemption, we recognise ourselves as mending what is perceived as a broken relationship while simultaneously attending to the perceived psychological, social and cultural differences between students as they engage with the cultural differences between disciplines. Despite this minor rupture in the location and framing of learning advising as a political technology (i.e. not counselling), the logic underpinning intervention is retained within the broader political rationality of social liberalism; that is, the socialisation of risk, and the diagnosis and rehabilitation of difference. This is largely treated through the therapeutic/educational work with the individual, which is still widely regarded as the most effective means for making a difference to the student experience of the academy and of him/herself.

This Chapter also demonstrated how, through the battle lines, learning advising emerged as ‘different’

- to academic teachers, in the rapport developed with students, as student advocates, and a safe house for the under-confident and poorly skilled;
- to counsellors, in that learning advisors were more concerned with what students could do than how they felt, and
- to educational developers, whose target was the teaching academic and the curriculum, and drew heavily on the principles of phenomenography to describe student difference in terms of approaches to learning.

The discourses of the learning advisor that emerge from these conditions are the humanist and critical traditions or discourses which mark the learning advisor as a student advocate, a safe space, a person-centred approach to learning assistance, a literacy intervention, a commitment to social justice and the belief that everyone can learn if given the right opportunities. While we see our legitimacy as embedded in the practical implications of a mass and diverse student population, I see our contingency in our effectiveness as the agent of redemption for the student at risk. This particular identity, of course, is born and grows up in the modernist project of emancipation, and within the humanist and critical discourses that sustain a belief in human progress, and individual and collective freedom.
Chapter Five Introduction

The discursive congruence embedded in the title of this chapter – learning advising in a learning society - tells its own story about the positioning of the learning advisor in a society governed by the imperative to learn. The reader will not be surprised to hear that this chapter covers the period of learning advising ‘coming into its own’ as the discursive conditions that mediate its existence provide the platform on which its perceived value is elevated to a new level. The story that this chapter tells, however, is one of an emerging profession both enabled and derailed by the prevailing policy discourses and immediate institutional exigencies that govern the intelligibility of their practices: despite the promise of a vision fulfilled for the learning advisor seeking to take a central role in teaching and learning, being central means making deals with the ‘shadowman’.

In Chapter Four, *ACT-I* and *II*, it was shown how the logic of social liberalism, the problematisation of academic and social wastage and a policy preoccupation with the individual and social group created the conditions for the emergence of the learning advisor as the ‘agent of redemption’ responsible for regulating normality in individuals and social groups through the discipline of difference.

Chapter Five, in contrast, traces the conditions that produced a transformation in the ethical agency of the learning advisor as they were increasingly invited to recognise themselves as ‘agents of change’ within the academy. *ACT-III* and *IV* in this chapter demonstrate how the emergent logic of neoliberalism and the problematisation of the higher education process as failing in its task of producing the employable graduate generated a policy preoccupation with efficiency and quality, and invited the learning advisor to participate as ‘agent of change’ as the governmental gaze and the object of intervention extended beyond the individual and social group to the curriculum and higher education professional. As ‘agent of change’, the learning advisor becomes less concerned with regulating normality by attending to difference, and more concerned with regulating autonomy and responsibility in the learner and academic
professional through the discipline of freedom and desire, as welfare strategies and the technologies of discipline (diagnosis and remediation) are displaced by market/consumer strategies and technologies of performance (actuarialism and alignment) (Brown, 2006; Miller & Rose, 2008; Peters, 2004; Rose, 1999). In these ACTs, the responsibilities of the learning advisor are shown to begin to overlap with the educational developers from which they became separated in ACT-II.

This chapter broadly covers the period from the 1980s to the early 2000s where the university, under scrutiny for its purpose and role in an emerging ‘knowledge economy’, is slowly transformed from ‘social leveller’ into ‘economic stabiliser’ and ‘full-service enterprise’ as ‘the social’ becomes reconfigured along neoliberal lines. As an economic stabiliser, university education becomes both a moral imperative for national citizens and an internationally marketed commodity for full-fee paying consumers of education. This period begins with the structural and financial reform during the late 1980s (unification and rationalisation); marketisation, internationalisation and curriculum reform in the 1990s; and moves into the more recent phenomena of ‘globalisation’ and increasing performativity (reregulation—targets, measures, outcomes) (Ball, 2000, 2003; Davies, et al., 2006; Robertson, 1999, 2003).

Broadly governed by the neoliberal logic that mobilising a civil society requires the responsibilisation of individuals and the individualisation of risk (Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999), and managing the tensions between the institutional policy imperatives of diversity (internationalisation and equity) and accountability (quality and transparency), the two ACTS in this chapter identify a rupture in the production of higher education student subjectivity as the object of government, from an ethical subjectivity (the lifelong learner) to an enterprising subjectivity (the Graduate). For the learning advisor, this shift provided the conditions for a significant period of growth and change in the field, and is represented here as inducing a rupture in and complexification of the learning advising identity.
ACT-III A curriculum intervention for the lifelong learner

ACT-III Introduction

ACT-III demonstrates how the constitution of the learning advisor as ‘mobiliser of the lifelong learner’ – tertiary literacy teacher, developer of self-directed resources and generic skills integrator - came to the fore in the mid 1990s in a particular socio-political (neoliberal internationalised post-industrial) context where the integration of ‘generic skills’ into the curriculum became a legitimate political practice. The argument put forward in this ACT is that while the lifelong learning agenda provided a platform on which learning advisors could elevate the value of their ‘educational’ work in the academy, it simultaneously entrapped them in a generic skills discourse which continues to frustrate ambitions of developing an academic literacy pedagogy that locates their practices centrally in disciplinary language and learning.

In the higher education sector, this is the period after the Dawkins’ reforms, which structurally unified universities and Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), and preceded a sweeping wave of reform exacerbating the tensions between the policy imperatives of efficiency, diversity and quality. The configuration of conditions that render ‘the learning advisor as integrator’ intelligible combine the emergence of market liberalism as the dominant form of political reasoning, the commodification and marketisation of higher education, the rationalisation and diversification of university finance, growing industry intervention in higher education, a deliberate erosion of boundaries between higher education and the workplace, and a policy preoccupation with the production of the ‘lifelong learner’ through explicit teaching of ‘transferable’ or ‘generic’ skills. In short, this involved the deliberate
reconstruction of the ‘welfare society’ into a ‘learning society’, and layered technologies of ‘freedom’ (prediction, regulation and control of the learning environment) over of the existing technologies of discipline (diagnosis and remediation of the individual and social group).

Rose (1999) provides considerable insight to this shift in the logic of government (see also Miller & Rose, 2008). He locates the emergence of ‘lifelong learning’ out of the crisis of the 1970s when, he suggests, cultivating citizens adaptable to ‘change’ became a governing logic, ‘unemployment’ a governed phenomena, and an active shift from ‘disciplinary pedagogy to perpetual training’ as one of the solutions (Rose, 1999, pp160-1). According to Rose, this shift saw disciplinary technologies (surveillance and normalisation) become overlaid with technologies of control: (freedom, choice, responsibility, evaluation and audit). Technologies of control, thus, do not take the form of oppressive strategies of power; rather they are technologies of freedom, enabling strategies or the ‘empowerment’ and responsibilisation of the population. According to this logic, the active citizen is transformed into an active consumer in the marketplace of life, responsibly engaged in a ‘continuous economic capitalisation of the self’ (1999, p161). This has implications for how education is imagined and the educated subject governed.

This ACT traces the emergence of these new discourses in education, the reconstruction of the subject of higher education and a reconceptualisation of what it means to be educated from the pure acquisition of disciplinary knowledge to the acquisition of generic skills (from ‘knowing what’ to ‘knowing how’). As governing society was seen to require ‘sharpen[ing] the implements’ for competition (Cowen, 1996b, p246) in what had come to be increasingly referred to as an ‘uncertain future’, its technologies were refashioned for ‘the construction of identities that can perform better’ (Chappell, Rhodes, Soloman, Tennant, & Yates, 2003); that is, education became central in the production of an increasingly skilled population with a predisposition to learning for life. Enterprise, responsibility and risk management became the organising metaphors for governing conduct in an unstable and globalised world.

In Australia, universities were subject to the Dawkins’ reforms (1988), and the 1990s settled in as a period of massive micro-level reform to the higher education sector around the notions of efficiency, quality and diversity. It is within the tensions between these various discourses that ‘skills’ talk, literacy and communication skills in particular, take on a political profile that is unprecedented, and learning advisors are handed a vehicle for the symbolic and material
elevation of their work. Under these conditions, the learning advisor as ‘agent of change’ and skills ‘integrator’ emerges – at least rhetorically, a full partner in the mobilisation of the lifelong learner with its shift to ‘integrated’, resource-based teaching for the self-directed learner.

i. The university as ‘economic stabiliser’

In this section, it is argued that the university as an apparatus of government was reconfigured from ‘social leveller’ to ‘economic stabiliser’ from the 1980s as education and training became targeted as the general solution to all economic and social ills through the mobilisation of civil society. This particular reconfiguration of the university is located at the intersection of historical circumstance and the rise of neoliberal reasoning, which emerged as a political and economic response to the various crises of the 1970s and the perceived failure of welfarism. This reasoning precipitated a wave of radical reforms to the higher education sector, requiring the university in particular to function according to the logic of the market and heralding a policy preoccupation with the production of the responsible, competent and flexible citizen/worker. In this context, it is argued, education took on a particular ‘skills’ focus and the university found itself in a crisis of purpose. It is here that the learning advisor emerged as agent of change – the integrator of skills for the lifelong learner.

Market liberalism

Out of the crises and instability of the 1970s came a discourse of risk and uncertainty that would dominate thinking about how society should be governed and how one must govern oneself. The perceived failure of welfarism to maintain itself in the face of its own ideals opened the discursive space for a new political rationality to take form and gain legitimacy. Without recourse to certainty or stability, a new mode of thinking about the social, and ‘social insurance’ in particular, was seen to be required. The government would first need to insure itself against the responsibilities it assumed but could not sustain in the 1970s. Tellingly, in the OECD’s (1981) *The Welfare State in Crisis*, the Secretary General tempered what was now recognised as rampant welfarism with the claim that the Government’s responsibility was only ‘to ensure for all citizens a minimum level of protection against social risks’ (Lennep, 1981, p10), as opposed to a maximum level one suspects. In this context, neo-dependency theory (Cowen, 1996a) would find an audience with its arguments that good
government would mobilise dependent sectors of the population and individualise risk through micro-level reform aimed at subjective reconstruction of the population. Within this discursive space, it can be argued that market liberalism emerged as a form of political reasoning problematising the interventionist and welfarist mode of government as creating a ‘culture of dependency’ (Peters, 2001).

Providing the alternative, market liberalism introduced its own idiom – ‘consumer choice’, its episteme – ‘marketing and managerialism’, and its techne – privatisation, deregulation and commodification. With this new regime, the responsibility of government would no longer be the provision of services, but the production of markets for basic services and ‘the mobilisation of civil society and … support for active citizenship’ (Edwards, 2004, p70). This involved transforming public services into private markets, through deregulation, commodification and privatisation. Equality, effectiveness and efficiency, it assumed, could all be achieved in the marketplace, through competition driven by consumer choice.

If we recognise the domain of government, or ‘the conduct of conduct’ (Gordon, 1991, p2), as essentially about ‘protection’ from risk, the risk that would now be the domain of government was less the protection of the individual from the excesses of the market, and more the protection of the market from the excesses of government. Through the lens of governmentality, this is described as a reflexive turn from the governmentalisation of the State to the ‘governmentalisation of government’ (Dean, 1999). Whereas governmentalisation of the State had involved the concentration of power with the State through the establishment of apparatuses of security and the regulation of the population, the governmentalisation of government involves turning the State upon itself (Dean, 1999, p195). This involves applying the mechanisms of government to government through micro-economic reform - privatisation, deregulation, corporatisation: and applying the technologies of performance to itself - accountability, efficiency, calculability. Public institutions – as apparatuses of security – were to find themselves reconfigured along market lines.

According to the logic of this rationality, ‘reflexive government no longer seeks to govern through society’ (Dean, 1999, p196), it governs through the creation and regulation of markets. The welfarist strategies of social liberal government were displaced by the consumerist strategies of neoliberal government (Peters, 2004). As Dean (1999) suggests,
what is problematised and transformed by contemporary liberalism is not the social..., but its welfarist form. The social will no longer be inscribed within a centralised and coordinating state; it will be reconfigured as a set of constructed markets in service provision and expertise, made operable through heterogeneous technologies of agency, and rendered calculable by technologies of performance that govern at a distance. (p193)

It is in this context that comparative education begins providing a ‘rereading of the world of international development, construed from a neo-dependency theory perspective’ (Cowen, 1996, p154). From this perspective it can be argued that increasingly, education and training became targeted as the general solution to all economic and social ills through the mobilisation of civil society.

The production of the competent and flexible worker

The focus on the university as an educational and economic stabiliser was largely due to the perception of the role it could play in the production of the competent and flexible worker. The emphasis on the stabilising role of education was highlighted by the Secretary General of the OECD, Jean-Claude Paye, in his opening address for Education in a Modern Society, where he stated,

In a period characterised by lower average growth rates... a marked rise in unemployment ... and increased constraint on public spending, every available means must be employed to ensure the stability, vitality, flexibility and adaptability of OECD economies. Of the means available, education has the greatest long-term potential. (OECD, 1985, p6)

The Secretary general identified multiple reasons for this, including: greater interdependence and competition between nations; the rapid advancement of knowledge and technology combined with the evolving needs of nations; the realisation that economic growth does not continue unabated, and therefore, the need to reconsider priorities; and importantly for this thesis, the need for ‘all young people and a growing proportion of the adult population [to be] involved in education and training; the need for education systems that are ‘capable of change’; and the need for education authorities to be more careful in their decision making (p6).
The interdependence and technologisation of western societies, it was said, had produced a post-industrial economy, referred to as ‘emerging knowledge-based economies’ (OECD, 1987). The so-called knowledge economy was characterised by uncertainty, international competition, and an ever increasing pace of knowledge and skills obsolescence. In short, it required a different kind of worker – one that could keep apace with change, renew skills and ability and lead the frontier of innovation. This would have profound implications for education institutions.

The real fear in the face of this uncertainty and international competition was the threat of ‘economic degradation and exclusion on a national or regional level if education [could not or would not] produce the competencies needed’ (Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000, p5). This is illustrated by the OECD (1985), which cited the Danish Minister of Education as saying, ‘The common enemies that…all OECD countries now combat in the domain of education are stagnation and mediocrity…’ (p19). The production of the competent and flexible worker was going to require a radical reconceptualisation of education and training – in fact, education and training were about to transgress their formal limits and blend into all facets of working and social life.

Like other OECD countries caught in this comparative construction of the world, Australia could not afford to be seen to be falling behind. Just a few years earlier, emphasising the quantitative aspects of youth participation as an indicator of developed economies (see Youth Unemployment, OECD, 1980)55, Australia had fallen behind significantly enough to warrant a new wave of Government intervention (Power, et al., 1985). In 1983, the Australian Labor Minister for Education, Richard Dawkins, invited the OECD to ‘assemble a team of experts to advise government of the youth unemployment situation and ways for dealing with it’ (OECD, 1986, p9). The 1986 review resulted in the publication of *Youth and Work in Australia: A Comprehensive Policy Agenda*, which stated

> Between now and the end of the century, if Australia shares the expected experience other OECD countries, its economy will require an increasingly better educated and

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trained workforce. There will be little opportunity for would-be workers with low levels of education and no occupational skills, or only out-of-date skills. (OECD 1986, p11)

This marks the beginning of a cultural and subjective reconstruction of the citizen as an object of international competition and a responsible consumer of education. The day of the unskilled worker was coming to an end. Society could no longer afford to shoulder the burden of the productively irrelevant. Facing the risk of an ‘unskilled’ workforce, skills acquisition and literacy in particular would become the new mantra of higher education policy. The demand of government on its citizens would be the commitment to learning for life (McWilliam, 2002; West, 1998). The university’s role in this, however, was going to require some definition.

*Transforming the university*

Defining and operationalising the university’s role in the learning society involved a significant amount of ‘crisis’ talk. The discursive importance of ‘crisis’ as the site of a knowledge/power struggle cannot be understated and has been taken up in the work of Thorpe (1998), who suggests that ‘an epistemic analysis of ‘crisis' discourse/practices in education is necessarily an analysis of the politics of representation and struggle over meaning’. Crisis narratives should not be seen as a true representation of reality, but as an interpretation and a powerful and productive site for the reconstruction of reality. It creates an opportunity for the public critique of privileged discursive practices and opens the space for new discursive practices to emerge as intelligible and legitimate (Nicholl & Edwards, 2004). As Cowen (1996a, p245) argues ‘…the university will and does change but it needs to be attacked and criticised publicly’ first. Crisis talk is ultimately about the location of blame, and most frequently, blame is squarely placed on education in general and the teacher in particular (Cary, 2004; Parr & Bellis, 2006). In this view, the university ‘in crisis’ is the site of political struggle on the cusp of change.

With the publication of the OECD Report (1987) *Universities under Scrutiny*, the alignment of the university to the discursive requirements of a changing labour market was inevitable. Reflecting on discussions at the 1981 OECD Intergovernmental Conference on Policies for Higher Education, some 5 years previous, the Report stated
It was clear throughout the discussions in the conference that the crisis of higher education is not merely one of public confidence vis-a-vis the performance of higher education; it is also and perhaps more fundamentally, an internal crisis of purpose, that is, one which touches on the very nature of individual institutions, their roles and functions and their place in the total higher education system. In this, a reappraisal of the special position of the university appeared as crucial. (OECD, 1983, p55)

Locating the crisis of universities as an internal one of purpose and function, this Report called on universities to ‘play an ever-more important part in the restructuring and growth of increasingly knowledge-based national economies’ (OECD, 1987, p8). It challenged the role of the university within the total system of higher education in ‘post-industrial societies’, suggesting the need for the erosion of boundaries between education and work, an alignment between the skills, values, dispositions required by the schools and the workplace alike, and the advent of lifelong learning (p10). But it stressed that while

...universities remain the preeminent institutions, the pace setters for academic standards, excellence and innovation... Desirable changes in higher education cannot be easily conceived and implemented if the university continues to remain aloof, sacrosanct and immune to the mounting pressures of the changing world around it. (OECD, 1987, p3)

Universities were not just under scrutiny, they were caught up in a crisis not of their own making. Accused of being inflexible to the demands of government and those engaged in driving transnational policy, they were going to find themselves over a barrel.

Duteously in Australia, the Federal Government’s Policy Statement Higher Education: Quality and Diversity in the 1990s (DEET, 1991) cited Michael Porter’s (1990) *The competitive advantage of nations* making a direct link between ‘unusually great’ investment in education and training and Australia’s future economic success:

There is little doubt from our research that education and training are decisive in national competitive advantage. The nations we studied that invest the most heavily in education (Germany, Japan and Korea) had advantages in many industries that could be traced in part to human resources. What is even more telling is that in every nation,

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56 Michael Porter, Professor of Business, Harvard Business School, specialises in competitive strategy.
those industries that were the most competitive were often those where specialised investment in education and training had been unusually great’ (Porter, 1990, p628 in Baldwin, 1991, p13).

That ‘unusually great’ investment, however, would now be less a state responsibility, and more an individual responsibility. The role that universities would be required to take ‘in the restructuring and growth of national knowledge-based economies’ was largely informed by the revisionist version of Human Capital Theory (HCT). Livingston (1997) suggests that HCT had been revived by a shift away from the original equation ‘formal schooling = knowledge = earnings = higher productivity and macro-economic growth’, which had been the governing logic for massive public spending on expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. The revisioned HCT had two inter-related shifts. The first was its newly acquired privatist form (Peters, 2001, p60); that is, higher education was recast as a private rather than a public investment, and its economic returns were now regarded as a micro rather than a macro-economic concern. The second was the shift in the primary indicator of what it meant to be educated from the acquisition of knowledge to the acquisition of ‘lifelong job-related learning skills’; that is, the equation was no longer ‘knowledge = earnings’, but ‘learning capacity = earnings’. This reflected the revised notion of what constituted an ‘effective employee’, emphasizing that ‘effective employees must be lifelong learners in an increasingly globally competitive enterprise environment’ (Livingstone, 1997, p8). The acquisition of skills and qualifications had become an individual investment and a lifelong commitment.

In Australia, the Dawkins’ (DEET, 1988) macro-reforms and subsequent micro-reforms, driven by the discursive imperatives of employability and international competitiveness, criticised and radically transformed the higher education sector at all levels. The binary system was eliminated, a new wave of expansion was actively encouraged, a subsidised user-pay scheme was introduced, and the equity agenda for greater participation combined with the impetus for greater efficiency in developing a flexible and skilled workforce. Educational reform in this era involved the replacement of welfare policy in education with ‘consumerist strategies’, where, as Edwards suggests, ‘the state enables rather than provides’ (Edwards, 2004, p434). In addition to unification and expansion, the sector was also rationalised and deregulated through the creation of an educational marketplace characterised by inter-university competition. Marginson (2004) suggests
…almost every policy move from the mid 1980s...was powered by faith in markets and the business model of higher education. This was a faith that the three ‘Cs’ of competition, corporatism and consumerism would lift efficiency, performance and rates of innovation; strengthen accountability to government, students and business; and provide fiscal relief. (p3)

In a relatively short space of time, it can be argued that education was transformed into a ‘trading game’ as aspects of consumerism and competition were introduced into the educational market (Marginson, 2004). Cowen (1996) describes this as a reconfiguration of education from a ‘modern’ to a ‘late modern’ system, where the purpose, process and product of education is governed by the discursive logic of the ‘international economy’, and where the State ‘redefines education as training, the citizen as consumer, education as commodity, and itself as regulator rather than provider; and educational contents and structures driven by skills specifications and the delivery of flexible educational packages’ (p161). The student is invited to recognise him/herself as a lifelong learner consuming educational packages in order to get ahead in life. Pedagogically, this creates the conditions for student-centred, self-directed and resource-based learning, where the university provides and the student consumes.

ii. Problematising the curriculum

In ACT-I and ACT-II, we saw the problematisation of academic and social wastage as the phenomena to be addressed by governmental intervention, which I argued led to a policy preoccupation with the individual and social group as the object of government. ACT-III illustrates how, in Chapter Five, the problematisation of university education as failing in its task of producing the employable graduate extends the lens of the governmental gaze beyond the individual and social group to the higher education curriculum. It is here that the graduate appears as a set of capacities and dispositions, the indirect object of intervention, as the higher education curriculum becomes the target of reform.

Where the given purpose of teaching and learning in the academy had once been the transmission of knowledge, such a purpose would now be regarded as inadequate to the task of enabling the population to function in a society where change had become the only certainty and where knowledge was superseded at increasing rates. Dawkins had pointed to the need for curriculum reform to ensure students developed the excellent communication,
critical and analytical skills required for ‘the future world of work’ (DEET, 1988). This recommendation as furthered in subsequent publications, such as Priorities for Reform (NBEET, 1990), Achieving Quality (HEC, 1992), and the Skills required of Graduates: One test of quality in Australian higher education (NBEET, 1992), which were all concerned with making explicit the qualities of graduates that would enable them '...to operate anywhere and in any sphere at a level of 'professionalism' consistent with best international practice and in ways that embody the highest ethical standards' (HEC, 1992, piii; NBEET, 1992, p12).

As the target of reform, the curriculum was critiqued through the vocabulary, the grammar and the logic of employability. Tellingly, the Business-Higher Education Round Table (BHERT) 57 was ‘established in 1990 to strengthen the relationship between business and higher education’ (BHERT, 2010), and an NBEET project brief for a study of recognised prior learning and generic skills stated,

Increasing emphasis on the need for generic skills, such as interpersonal and communication skills, in all employment areas raises the question of whether they are sufficiently provided for in many courses…. The integration of transferable employment related generic skills is necessary to both general and specialised vocational courses. (Golding, Marginson, & Pascoe, 1996, p2)

Universities were accused of producing a bunch of ‘cultural illiterates’, ill-prepared for the world of work (NBEET, 1990, p4). The national Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training’s Priorities for Reform Report (NBEET, 1990) stated that Australian graduates were ‘not flexible, not good communicators, not analytical, creative thinkers…..’ (pxiii), and ‘the source of these problems lies in the design of the higher education curriculum (pxiii). Citing the OECDs (1986) Universities under Scrutiny, the Report combined its concerns for curriculum reform with an emphasis on the need for teachable, measurable and comparable outcomes and output. Although not well-received, the Report would have a significant impact on the sector and the learning advisor in the years to come.

57 Since its establishment, BHERT has produced a number of papers, position statements and reports, such as the (1991) Aiming Higher,’A report of the survey of Round Table members and others about their concerns about education, and their views on standards in schooling and higher education. July 1991; the (1993) Graduating to the Workplace,’ A report of a survey of the attitudes of university students from business and commerce faculties on education, business and education/business interaction. May 1993 (see BHERT 2010 http://www.bhert.com/)
Priorities for Reform squarely targeted the quality of the higher education curriculum and the professionalism of the teaching academic. In considering particular models for the provision of these higher order skills, the Report made the case that concurrent models of provision were favoured over foundations courses which extended the length of a student’s degree. Two cited examples included: the General Education Program at UNSW, and the 'Context curriculum' at RMIT - where professionals become literate in the realms of discourse which will have an impact upon or be affected by their professional fields' (p31). Based on the logic of self-regulation as a technology of performance (freedom), the approach taken by each institution was ultimately their responsibility (choice).

With its gaze firmly on the curriculum, however, the Report suggested that the central aims of curricula must be reoriented ‘to generate wider social and cultural perspectives, promote higher level, 'transferable' abilities, and address deficiencies in communication skills’ (1990, p27). Of most relevance to the learning advisor was its suggestion that ‘in the empowerment of human beings to control their own destiny in modern society...numeracy perhaps is only secondary to literacy' (1990, p27), and as such further research would be required into the ‘communication difficulties of students (both oral and written) to 1. assess the proportion of students whose performance is adversely affected by communication skills, 2. identify the kinds of difficulties commonly experienced, and 3. recommend appropriate remedial measures’ (1990, pxv). In terms of possible solutions to this problem,

the only solid suggestion contained in evidence to the committee was that 'study skills' units within institutions should be strengthened by the provision of extra staff and facilities - the committee would support proposals to strengthen their role. The evidence contained within the submissions suggests however that communication difficulties are now so widespread and that measures of this kind are unlikely to provide the complete solution’ (NBEET, 1990, pp41-42).

While the literacy levels of students had long been a concern of university educators, it had up to now been firmly contained in a remedial service for those students who required additional assistance. But perhaps those ‘study skills people’ could come up with a more efficient strategy of meeting students’ communication skills needs - perhaps by working on the curriculum or in the production of self-directed resources. This opening represented an excellent opportunity for learning advisors to locate themselves more centrally in the educational process. The literacy agenda would become a political lever of change in higher
education – heavily wrapped in skills talk. The integration of ‘generic skills’ had become a legitimate political practice.

iii. Making sense of lifelong learning

In **ACT-III**, we have considered the way the higher education curriculum became problematised as: a revised Human Capital Theory emphasised the link between learning capacity and economic growth; and a shift in political reasoning produced a greater emphasis on individual responsibility and a commitment to learning for life. Within this context, the policy mantra of lifelong learning found a foothold and created the discursive space for a proliferation of research and reports promoting educational change strategies that would enable curriculum enhancements that could ‘scaffold’\(^58\) the independent lifelong learner.

Importantly, making sense of lifelong learning as a problem of higher order skills developed through the curriculum shifted the target of disciplinary action from the individual student to the individual academic and their curriculum design and teaching expertise. The lifelong learning agenda thus extended across the student body to the staff of the university and insisted on a gradual process of professionalising teaching as means for disciplining the will and desire of the teaching academic.

Taking the objectives of **Priorities for Reform** (NBEET, 1990) to a new level, the Higher Education Council’s **Achieving Quality** (1992) stated,

> There are skills, personal attributes, and values which should be acquired by all graduates regardless of their discipline or field of study. In other words, they should represent the central achievements of higher education as a process. (HEC, 1993, p20)

Elaborating on this notion of high level transferable skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, logical and independent thought, and the skills associated in locating and managing

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\(^{58}\) The term ‘instructional scaffolding’ was first introduced by the cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1956), who drew on the work of Lev Vygotsky (1934, 1978), to explain the social and cognitive dimensions of first language acquisition. Today the term is widely used in education to talk about curriculum and pedagogical design that recognises and facilitates the social and iterative dimensions of students’ conceptual and practical language and learning development.
information, the Report stated quite clearly that ‘while discipline skills and technical proficiency were seen as important...the so-called higher level generic skills were seen as critically important, and sometimes lacking’ (p20). At the top of the list were communication skills and the capacity to learn (p22); after all, it was now widely agreed that ‘the skills of learning-to-learn endure long after the detailed and specific knowledge is forgotten...[and students required] the ability to shape their own destinies’ (Candy, 1995): self-education - lifelong learning - was a moral obligation and an important technology of freedom.

But it was more than that. Lifelong learning was one of the most significant levers for the comprehensive reform of university education in the 1990s. Providing a neat framework for implementing this reform in the Australian context came from a report entitled Developing Lifelong Learners through Undergraduate Education (Candy, Crebert, & O'Leary, 1994). Commissioned by the Higher Education Council and AVCC in 1993, the report focused on

…the extent to which, and the ways in which, undergraduate education can assist graduates to enhance their skills and attitudes towards lifelong learning, with the particular intention of allowing them to take conscious control of their learning after graduation. (Candy, et al., 1993, pxi)

Drawing on the UNESCO definition, the report promoted lifelong education as having five criteria: lasting the whole life of the individual; leading to the systematic acquisition and continual upgrading of knowledge and skills; aiming for individual self-fulfilment; promoting ability for and engagement in self-directed activities; and acknowledging the role of informal/non-formal learning opportunities.

Working from the received premise that ‘many of the curricular, instructional and assessment practices currently in use in Australian universities … actively militate against the development of lifelong learning attributes in graduates’ (pxii), the report offered five principles for courses that enhance lifelong learning: ‘they provide a systematic introduction to the field of study; they offer a comparative or contextual framework for viewing the field of study; they seek to broaden the student and provide generic skills; they offer some freedom of choice and flexibility in structure; and they provide for the incremental development of self-directed learning’ (Cropley, 1979, p3 cited in Candy, et al., 1994, p17).
The report also set out comprehensive requirements for universities in all aspects of its teaching and learning operations: to have an explicit policy on developing lifelong learners; to locate the development of lifelong learning skills and attitudes as a core objective of all undergraduate courses; to improve access to mature age non-traditional students; to recognise both formal and informal prior learning; to provide staff development in order to enhance curriculum design; develop appropriate course evaluation mechanisms to monitor its ability to develop the lifelong learner; include systems of course accreditation and review; demonstrate specific support for learning-to-learn and information literacy programs; and where appropriate, introduce students to alternative learning strategies and teaching technologies which encourage self-managed learning (Candy, et al., 1994, pxiii).

Providing the learning advising field with academic gravitas, Candy, et al. (1994) identified learning advisors as important facilitators of university learning and ‘full partners in the education process’:

…the enhancement and the facilitation of learning should be viewed as the central purpose of the university, and accordingly student support services such as libraries, learning centres and study skills units, and computer-based education facilities should be regarded as full partners in the education process. (pxii)

Building layer upon layer, NBEET published a report in 1996, *Lifelong Learning – Key Issues*, which began by locating the imperative for lifelong learning as an OECD initiative, framing it in terms of both an economic imperative as ‘competence advantage’ and in liberal / humane terms as ‘quality of life’ (NBEET, 1996, p2). Within this rationality, however, competence advantage and quality of life were inseparable. Despite this, lifelong learning, it seems, is never represented as a purely economic imperative as most Government reports insist on its dual imperative, its economic and social function. For example, the 1996 NBEET Report states,

While economic globalisation and the transformation of workplaces by technology is an impetus towards lifelong learning, there is an increasing recognition that the effective operation of modern industrial democracies depends on a well-informed citizenry. (NBEET, 1996, p4)
Its social function would be the enablement and responsibilisation of the ‘well-informed’
citizen, as identified in the report’s citation of the spokesperson for the World Initiative on
Lifelong Learning (1995) at the First Global Conference on Lifelong Learning in 1994

The key principles governing provision (of education and training) in the future must
be the primacy of personal responsibility for learning encouraged and enabled by
support for the whole community. (NBEET, 1996, p8)

Accordingly, the report explicitly invokes ‘the concept of self-directed learning in a voluntary
capacity’. This is very similar to the self-regulation of institutions mentioned earlier, and the
‘voluntary self-assessment undertaken by institutions’ after the introduction of the Quality
large as the technologies of performance and freedom from the individual, to the community,
to the bureaucracy governing behaviour.

It was in this context that the phenomenographic, or ‘learning to learn’, movement that had
left learning advisors to their work with students in ACT-II, found in fashion its focus on
curriculum reform and the teaching professional. Indeed, a book published by one of the key
leaders of this movement, *Learning to Teach in Higher Education* (Ramsden, 1992), became
a bible for those academic developers and administrators in Australian universities who
advocated teaching and learning reform in higher education.

*Learning to teach* promoted the ‘professional approach’ (p9) to teaching where theory would
inform design. From this perspective, curriculum design was considered all important because
student learning problems were seen to be addressed through learning design: it was not the
social and cultural differences between individual students that was regarded as the problem,
but the way the curriculum and assessment tasks oriented student learning (Bowden, 1986a).
To overcome this, teaching professionals were required to be ‘reflective and enquiring’ (p5),
‘reason[ing] about what they do and why they do it’ (p5). This process would be informed by
the managerial theories of organisational change (see, for example, Ford, 1991; London,
Schon, 1987) and the practicalities of implementing change processes in higher education (eg.
Harvey & Knight, 1996; Ramsden, 1992).
Despite the rhetoric of professionalisation, the focus of activities was not on transforming the individual teacher through a skills approach alone. It embodied the neoliberal philosophy of cultural and subjective reconstruction by working on the conditions and environment in which one worked. These practices would reform the learning environment by reforming the choices that could be made in the teaching environment, such as the choices about assessment. Ramsden (1992) insisted

To achieve change in the quality of teaching and learning, we ought rather to look carefully at the environment in which a lecturer works and the system of ideas which that environment represents. This means an emphasis on courses and departments as well as on individual academics. It is often more efficient and more practical to change a large course than to start by trying to change every single teacher in it…the highest point of intervention, for the purposes of this book, is the institution itself. What understanding of teaching is manifest in its public statements and its internal procedures? To what extent does a university or college vigorously promote teaching which will lead to high quality learning? If it wants teachers to change, it must direct resources towards helping them to change. (p7)

With pressure on university teachers mounting, learning advisors, as agents of change, could offer themselves as resources to be drawn on towards the ends of lifelong learning.

iv. Representing the lifelong learner

The lifelong learner can be described as an economic, ethical and psycho-social subject: the rational and ethical consumer of education; an active, confident and motivated participant in the learning process; and the indirect object of educational reform. Representing the lifelong learner in this way requires making the discursive shift from managing specific differences in the individual to attending to diversity in the population. The logic underpinning this particular student identity, however, is based on a mass identity – it belongs to a discourse of sameness – the student becomes a ‘dividual’ (Rose, 1999, p234), a set of dispositions and capabilities: the discursive outcome of specifically designed educational affordances.

**Difference – diversity: the student as ‘dividual’**

In **ACT-I** and **ACT-II**, disciplinary strategies were shown to be concerned with attending to the difference between individuals and social groups. In **ACT-III** and **ACT-IV**, the
emergence of control strategies are shown to seek the administrative management of populations at risk, anticipating 'possible loci of dangerous irruptions through the identification of sites statistically locatable in relation to norms and means' (Rose, 1999, p235). In such a regime of control, 'we are not dealing with 'individuals' but 'dividuals', not subjects with a unique personality but ...elements, capacities, potentialities’ (Rose, 1999, p234). A control regime and its strategies can be read into this particular historical and educational context in two ways. On the one hand, students’ socio-cultural differences continue to be rendered visible by statistical calculation as one means for predicting and managing populations ‘at risk’ and targeting redemptive intervention (equity, international). On the other, ‘student diversity’ is discursively deployed as the context within which curriculum and pedagogical reform are justified and leveraged.

According to Watson (2010), in control society, the diagnosis of difference continues, but becomes a resource for mainstreaming difference. She suggests that while the labelling of difference continues within the process of mainstreaming, its purpose changes. Difference is not something that is to be treated differently, but to be ‘brought into the fold’ (p98). Diversity becomes the norm while it glosses real and material differences. Edwards (2004) provides some insight here in his critique of the central role that education systems, and more specifically qualifications, have come to play ‘in addressing social, economic and civic challenges’ (p69). For Edwards, the most disturbing aspect is the shift in policy focus from structures of provision to the responsibilities of the individual. Edwards (2004) suggests that in this move,

…the individual is often positioned as responsible for their own condition, with less concern for the wider structures of inequality built into the labour market and social relations in general. The message at times seems to be one of consuming your way out of exclusion through learning and qualifications, when, of course, opportunities are structurally patterned. Thus, while access to skills and qualifications might be increased, they may not be widened (Green, 2002), and, despite or because of the specific discourses of lifelong learning in play, opportunity may be circumscribed. (p69)

What Edwards is suggesting is that within a ‘mass’ system based on consumerist notions of provision, difference tends to become normalised through the notion of ‘diversity’, and subsequently ‘inclusive’ educational provision tends to become less politically aware of structural and material difference as a matter for educational intervention. Rather than
focusing on difference, the technologies of discipline are layered over with technologies of freedom, responsibilising the individual by providing the conditions for the individual to take care of oneself. Here we see normalisation become decoupled from disciplinary practices as control strategies seek to govern at a distance with a focus on ‘the mass control of elements of behaviour’ (Dumm, 1996, p131).

To consider how this was deployed in Australian universities, we might note that control requires strategic flows of intervention, and in a mass system, an easy target of populations at risk is the first year cohort where statistics of retention and attrition are paramount to a university’s ongoing credibility with the government. In Australia during the 1990s, ‘student diversity’ combined with the long-held political and economic concerns of transition and retention rendered the first year of study as the major locus of change. This is evidenced by the CAUT\textsuperscript{59} commissioned report \textit{First year on campus: Diversity in the initial experiences of Australian undergraduates} (McInnes, James, & McNaught, 1995). The report defined ‘diversity’ as capturing the aspects of student difference already identified through statistical means (age, gender, place of living, ethnicity and socio-economic background), and extended it to include those differences not easily rendered visible and manageable by statistical means.

\textit{‘Diversity’ is commonly taken to refer to age, gender, place of living, ethnicity and socio-economic background. Such differences in the student population, however, are accompanied by a less visible diversity, one which finds its roots in family and educational backgrounds, values, attitudes and expectations. The expansion of participation has increased the critical mass for identifiable subgroups that were formerly significantly under-represented in universities. In this context, the notion of a mainstream of students is somewhat illusory. We believe that universities and academics are still to come to terms with the full implications of student diversity in higher education: the changing needs of the student population are not well-understood, especially with respect to motives, interests and academic abilities. (McInnes, et al., 1995, pix)\textsuperscript{59}"

Student diversity as a concept had became the norm around which the first year curriculum could be configured. And with diversity as the new norm, it was suggested that ‘more students would now require assistance beyond what was the norm’ (pxii), but such support

\textsuperscript{59} The Government funded Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT)
‘should not dilute the challenge of independent learning…and… the journey towards intellectual independence’ (pxii). Thus, while support would be required, it could not be seen as ‘hand-holding’ or ‘wrapping students in cotton wool’. Instead, the educational process would offer specific affordances for individuals to take responsibility for themselves.

The lifelong learner as a ‘skills – values – attitudes' composite

As the indirect object of reform, the lifelong learner came to be represented as a complex set of specific and general higher order skills, values and attitudes, a composite of

…the technical knowledge and skills required to function effectively in the workplace, and a set of generic attributes or personal transferable skills such as communication competence, teamwork, computer skills, and personal organisation. (Candy 2000, p1)

The 1996 NBEET Report identifies the enabling dispositions of the lifelong learner as: the necessary skills and attitudes for learning, especially literacy and numeracy skills; the confidence to learn, including a sense of engagement with the education and training system; and the willingness and motivation to learn (NBEET, 1996, p3). Note that this definition highlights skills, confidence and motivation – three characteristics of the psycho-social definition of a student, albeit now addressed through the affordances of the curriculum:

The National Board believes that, if education and training programs are explicitly designed with the development or preservation of these characteristics in mind, then the number of people who slip through the system or become alienated from it will be reduced. Those staying within such a system will acquire an array of skills that will be of use whenever and in whatever context they must learn. (NBEET, 1996, p3)

The psycho-social aspects of the lifelong learner, ‘the willingness and ability to go on learning once the scaffolding afforded by the educational institution is removed’ (Candy, 2000, p1) demonstrate how the will and desire of the citizen becomes the object of discipline for the regime of learning for life. The student is discursively replaced by an abstract concept of the learner who has an ethical obligation to make the most of educational affordances. This can be seen to translate pedagogically into the production of student-centred, resource-based, self-directed learning opportunities.
v. Mobilising the lifelong learner

Although as early as the Dawkins’ reforms it was given that ‘the principle of lifelong education is now accepted as fundamental to achieving social, cultural, technological and structural change, and to our future economic development’ (Dawkins, 1988, p68), achieving lifelong education was another matter. Within a regime of control, a number of strategies would be deployed at the institutional, pedagogical and professional level. These included an emphasis on participatory change practices, and it is in this context that learning advisors were invited to regard themselves as ‘full partners’ in the enhancement and facilitation of learning, as agents of change, value-adding to a student’s university education. For the learning advisor, ‘value-adding’ was seen largely, at least for the time being, as a problem of process (NBEET, 1996), the enhancement of teaching and learning provision for a diverse student population through the collaborative integration of generic skills/tertiary literacy into subject curricula, particularly at the first year level, and development of student-centred, online or self-directed student resources.

**Participatory change practices**

It is in this context, partnerships and participatory change practices came to dominate higher education reform. It would appear that in order for the autonomy of students to increase, the autonomy of the university and academic staff must decrease. Pushing the relational aspects of the lifelong learning project, Candy (2000) suggested

…lifelong learning must be a partnership between government, universities, schools and other education providers, employers, the professions and the community at large....only through this commitment will the full realisation of the ‘learning society’ be borne. (p7)

A good example of this can be seen in the various publications submitted to the 2001 Annual Higher Education Research and Development Association (HERDSA) Conference: *Learning Partnerships*.

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Humes (2000), drawing on the work of Hargreaves (1994) and others, provides a useful critique of the use of ‘participation’ as it is deployed in advanced liberal democracies and education systems in particular, arguing that it should be regarded more as a ‘regulatory mechanism which serves to reduce teachers’ autonomy and increase their accountability’ (p42). This, he suggests, is an effect of the rise of culture management in organisations that emerged in the 1980s, and needs to be discerned from the notion of ‘authentic involvement’. Specifically analysing how it is used in the Scottish context, Humes argues that ‘the discourse of participation is closely allied to notions of consultation, partnership and consensus’ where ‘the partners are not equal and the consensus is more apparent than real’ (p43).

For the learning advisor as an ‘agent of change’, she is invited to recognise herself as charged with the ethical duty of improving the student learning environment by inviting the discipline academic to engage in collaborative change practices. This represents a transgression for the agent of redemption who may have once acted as ‘culture broker’ and ‘facilitator’, but is now charged with being the ‘botherer’ or the ‘literacy police’, whose role is to intervene in their discipline colleagues’ performance. For the learning advisor, the agent of change would be engaged in the proactive negotiation of collaborative curriculum-integrated practices and the development of online resources, to name the two most common.

With this new ethical imperative, learning advising work with the individual student began to lose its self-evidence. The individual consultation, which had gained such favour for the agent of redemption, found itself increasingly cast as inequitable, remedial, labour-intensive, costly and responsible for the marginalisation of learning advising expertise. Its real inefficiency, however, was the fact that it was adding value to the individual rather than the organisation. What was becoming increasingly ‘valued’, was not what the learning advisor could do for the individual student, but what it could do for the university given that curriculum had become such a marketable commodity and an important vehicle for employability. Ironically, this was occurring at a time when ‘student-centred’ learning was coming into fashion. ‘Student-centred’ learning, however, was never about person-centred practices, but of reconfiguring pedagogy to render mass-delivered education sensitive to ‘diversity’.
Person-centred to student-centred practices

Making the discursive shift from managing specific differences in the individual to attending to student diversity in the population required a shift from person-centred to student-centred practices. Student-centred learning has a wide range of interpretations (see O’Neill & McMahon, 2005), but politically, it was deployed to reform the educational process. In essence, however, student-centred practices tend to be curriculum-centred; that is, they are practices designed in to the mass-delivered curriculum to promote an active learning environment that emphasises such things as individual and collective responsibility, student choice, involvement and participation, peer-interaction, resources, reflective practice, experiential learning, flexibility, relevance and individual transformation (O’Neill & McMahon, 2005).

The shift to student-centred practices was arguably part of a broader shift to the ‘learning paradigm’, so neatly coined by Barr and Tagg (1995). As a deliberate discursive strategy to transform what was now regarded as the more traditional ‘instructional paradigm’, the learning paradigm locates the learner at the centre of a carefully designed and ‘enabling’ environment where learning outcomes are considered the product of mutual engagement between the student and curriculum affordances. In the learning paradigm,

…learning environments and activities are learner-centered and learner controlled. They may even be "teacherless." While teachers will have designed the learning experiences and environments students use - often through teamwork with each other and other staff - they need not be present for or participate in every structured learning activity. (Barr & Tagg, 1995, pp21-2)

Edwards (2004) suggests that in the learning paradigm, ‘learning and learners become more important than structures of provision, wherein the individual is often positioned as responsible for their own condition’ (p69).

The shift to the learning paradigm, according to Barr and Tagg (1995), ‘liberates institutions from a set of difficult constraints’ because it allows them to balance budgets while continuing to meet the demand for higher education from an ‘increasingly diverse’ population of students. There is a rather significant leap of faith, however, between the earlier suggestion that ‘more students will require assistance beyond what was once the norm’ and the proposed
solution as a shift to the ‘learning paradigm’ where students will take advantage of the ‘teacherless’ affordances of a well-designed learning environment. The material reality is that the interminable variation in students’ abilities demand that learning advisors continue with the practices of redemption – individual consultations and small group teaching. The agent of redemption continues unabated.

Meanwhile, the concepts of ‘student diversity’ and the ‘learning paradigm’ demand that learning advisors engage in practices of change. According to the logic of organisational change, they suggest that such a shift is not instantaneous but incremental, ‘a gradual process of modification and experimentation through which we alter many organisational parts in light of a new vision for the whole’ (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p20). The vision can be achieved by changing the organisational structure and leveraging change through the assessment of an educational institution’s performance in terms of ‘value-added’ (p20). Plan, act, review and improve, as the quality mantra would have it, and be sure to measure the value of the intervention.

The difference between person-centred and student-centred practices is substantial. Ironically, ‘student-centred’ practices tend to involve very little direct contact with the student. Whereas in person-centred practices learning is located in the dialogic relationship established between the student and the learning advisor, with student or curriculum-centred practices, learning is located in mere access to, and occasionally completion of, a pre-designed task, such as a lecture followed by a quiz, or a set of self-directed resource-based activities that students are required to work through.

At the risk of over-simplifying the difference between the two practices, but in order to make the distinction more pointed, I wish to stress that whereas person-centred practices work in a dialogic way engaging with the complexities of the student as he/she negotiates the demands of the task at hand, student or curriculum-centred practices tend to work didactically engaging with the complexities of the task to make them explicit to the student. One is student-driven and works at the level of individual; one is task-driven and works at the level of mass-delivery within the curriculum through the design of activities that provide students with opportunities to come to terms with task expectations. Because of their design for mass-delivery, student-centred practices can only assume an abstract ‘generic’ but also ‘diverse’ learner – a complex and yet normative abstraction whose learning must be assured through careful management of
the learning environment, rather than the individual student *per se*. To do this, student/curriculum-centred practices work in a hierarchical way from the normative expectation of the curriculum towards the student in the hope that any gap may be bridged, but often without any evidence that that has been the case.

The paradox of living with the tension of these two sets of practices emerges when the justification of curriculum-centred practices reconfigures or revisions what can be considered efficient and effective. Despite their continued use, the practices of redemption (person-centred practices) become recast as inefficient, *ad hoc*, inequitable and even remedial. Such a view is particularly evident in the following statement taken from a 1998 paper by advocates of the ‘integrated’ approach:

> While Learning Centres were initially developed to assist [student] transition, the support they offered was limited: it was remedial in the sense of ‘fixing-up’ the students who were diagnosed (either by themselves or their lecturers) as needing help; it was inequitable, assisting only a very small proportion of the student population; and it was generic in that the learning support was offered outside the disciplines being studied’. (Skillen, et al., 1999, p1)

Within this framework for thinking about practice, curriculum-integration became intelligible as a popular and increasingly common practice.

**Curriculum integration – collaboration - change agency**

Pedagogically, the notion of student diversity and the need for mainstream developmental support provided the logic and language for a philosophy promoting curriculum-integrated skills development as can be seen in the following excerpt from Skillen and Mahoney’s conference paper in 1997:

> Commitment to teaching and learning in higher education has long been premised on assumptions that:

> - on enrolment, students are already equipped with generic skills of learning and literacy suitable for tertiary study;

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61 Integration has more recently been referred to as embedding.
• when they do not have the necessary skills, or do not begin to develop them appropriately, it is a remedial problem; and,
• those responsible for development of generic and discipline-specific learning and literacy skills must be situated outside of the body of academics teaching in an academic program.

These assumptions are no longer tenable. It is now recognised that academic success in higher education entails the acquisition of academic learning and language skills which are new to our average student at university entry. Facilitating the acquisition of such skills is thus not seen as a remedial strategy but a developmental goal which allows all students to be initiated into the academic and professional discourses of academia, and which gives all students greater chances to achieve at their potential. Integration of instruction in learning and literacy skills into mainstream teaching programs through curricula change, revised graduate outcomes and staff development are essential to this goal. Achieving these objectives, however, requires institutional change which is often problematic in traditional university contexts. The presence of leadership, change agents and discontinuity can provide the impetus for such change to occur. (Skillen & Mahoney, 1997, p1)

While the theoretical and material practice of institutional change and integration had existed at least since the early 1970s from various discourses - personal welfare strategies in the ‘living/learning model’ (Frederick, 1974), ‘study skills’ (Zuber-Skerrit, 1982), ‘learning skills’ (Bain, 1990) and ‘academic discourse’ (Chanock, 1994b) - it was only in the 1990s that curriculum-integration (of generic skills, tertiary literacy, transferable skills, graduate attributes) became a politically sanctioned practice. The theme of the 1994 LAS Conference ‘Integrating the Teaching of Academic Discourse into Courses in the Disciplines’ (Chanock, 1994b) highlights the prevalence that was given to curriculum-integration within the field at this time.

An unstable practice of endless variation, integration generally involves: a collaborative relationship between the learning advisor and the subject coordinator/ discipline, theoretically as a process of co-production of knowledge and capacity (staff development) (Lee, 1997), but more realistically, or at least more often, as a specialist pedagogue performing their ‘expertise’ for students inside or as an adjunct to subject curricula. Ideally, it involves a collaborative analysis and identification of the disciplinary literacy/skill expectations of a particular assignment or disciplinary convention, which is then reconstituted for teaching and learning purposes to model what is expected of students and ‘scaffold’ their understanding and ability to perform accordingly (curriculum development). It therefore involves the use of
authentic discipline or subject-based materials and student-based strategies (Hicks, Irons, & Zeegers, 1994; Skillen & Mahoney, 1997; Skillen, et al., 1999; Webb & Bonnano, 1995).

Collaboration is a crucial component of integration, and although its focus may include macro-or micro-level ‘interventions’ (George & O'Regan, 1998), whether it includes ‘critical conversations’ (Smith & Whelan, 2005), ‘co-production’ (Lee, 1997), ‘reciprocity’ and ‘emancipatory aspirations’ (Cartwright, 1994), at the heart of this practice, whether or not it is mandated from the top, lies change agency, and underlying it, the imperative to participate in change practices (Humes, 2000). While the literature draws attention to the positive outcomes of participatory consultation practices in the workplace (eg. Reason, 1998), Humes (2000) draws our attention to the paradox of participation: as one is urged to increase participation, one must also let go of autonomy and acquiesce to greater accountability. From this perspective, participation is seen as a discursive form of regulation and an insidious form of culture management. It is through these discursive forms that a ‘positive climate which encourages the internalization of constructive attitudes among the workforce’ (p35) is used to gain greater control of the soul. From this perspective, Humes (2000) argues that the ‘consultation process is skilfully orchestrated … the ‘partners’ are certainly not equal and the consensus is often more apparent than real’ (p43); that is, consensus tends to be more the product of silence than engagement (Zipin & Brennan, 2003).

Making the specific link between collaboration and change agency, the right combination of collaboration and integration is believed to result in transformation [another organisational change term]: transformation in the disciplinary lecturer’s values, knowledge and practice as they relate to the role of language and literacy in learning; in the explicit teaching of disciplinary literacies as they become embedded in the curriculum (preferably in the form of curriculum design, resources and activities); and/or the student learning outcomes, as a result of the ‘intervention’; that is, as a result of the collaborative efforts of the specialist pedagogue and the disciplinary lecturer. Accordingly, for those who do regard themselves as change agents, transformation is considered the ideal conclusion to the practice of curriculum integration, as illustrated below.

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62 I will refer to this as ‘subjective alignment’ and take this idea up further in ACT IV.
Integration can achieve transformation: transformation of people’s knowledge and skills, of their practices and their values: the ‘people’ here are of course both discipline academics and learning developers. Collaborating in integration can allow us to act as “transformers” of curricula (Webb, 2002, p.15) or “change agents” (Skillen & Mahony, 1996) for institutional practice. In fact, working in this way may lead us towards what Webb (2002, p. 18) hoped learning developers might be known as: "catalysts for systemic change, facilitators of organisational learning, [and]...partners in the transformation of university teaching and learning. (James, Skillen, Percy, Tootell, & Irvine, 2004)

Within my own institution, the Integrated Development of English Language and Learning (IDEALL) approach (Skillen, et al., 1999) became the dominant approach from the late 1990s. The IDEALL approach distinguished itself from other ‘integrated’ approaches that it accused of being ad hoc and piecemeal, such as the ‘one-off lecture’, the ‘adjunct seminar series’ or the ‘for-credit academic skills subject’. These practices were regarded as inferior because they maintained a remedial model by separating content and skills responsibilities within the curriculum and failed to capitalise on staff development; that is, they did not engage as change practices that sought to transform the culture of the institution and the capacities of its staff. Rather prescriptively, the IDEALL approach involved conducting a collaborative skills inventory of the curriculum, assessing students’ literacy and language skills, designing and implementing tertiary literacy instruction and evaluating student learning outcomes. The realities of implementation, however, meant this initial prescription was radically altered by multiple variations very early into the piece (see Percy & Stirling, 2005 for further discussion).

This particular model is an excellent example of how change practices combined the disciplinary and control strategies of diagnosis, prediction and intervention. In this case, the intervention began with a diagnostic literacy assessment (MASUS)\(^{63}\) that provided students with individualised feedback on their strengths and weaknesses (streamlined through explicit marking criteria) and pointed them to ‘appropriate’ learning resources and instruction. The diagnostic results were also aggregated and used to predict all first year students’ literacy and learning needs. A good example of how the diagnostic results were used can be found in the work of Webb & Bonanno (1995), who were implementing a similar model at the University

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of Sydney using the MASUS procedure they had devised (Webb, Bonanno, & Jones, 1993). They used their initial diagnostic tests to ‘provide profiles of students’ developing learning of literacy’, predict patterns of literacy skill development among similar cohorts, and argue the case for ongoing literacy teaching within the curriculum (Webb & Bonnano, 1995, no page. The prediction that all students would have some level of need created the case for more proactive preventative (control) rather than reactive (disciplinary) strategies.

Embedded in this type of curriculum-integration was the increased use of technology for teaching (flexible delivery) and the increasing value placed on resource-based learning. The development of self-directed, print and online, resources, either integrated into subjects or stand alone, became a key feature of this approach. In addition to staff and curriculum development, the production of reusable resources for staff and students were intended to make these practices sustainable over time.

**Resource-based self-directed learning**

If we return to the logic that a lifelong learning pedagogy required the provision of a systematic introduction to the field, opportunities for comparative study, generic skills, freedom of choice and the incremental development of self-directed learning (Candy, Crebert & O’Leary, 1994, p17), then interactive online resources were seen to tick all the boxes. It also presented as an efficient way of making this information available to more students more often.

The need for learning advisors to reposition themselves in relation to flexible learning and online delivery was made clear in the 1999 LAS Conference at Monash University where the theme was *Language and LEARNING: the learning dimension of our work*, and which actively sought to ‘balanc[e] the ledger as it were, on deliberations on our language and learning work’ (Crosling, Moore, & Vance, 1999, p1). In the Introduction to the Proceedings, its Editors claimed that the efforts of this conference were to ‘highlight’ the ‘learning side of our work’ for two inter-related reasons: the ‘language issues that concern us in our work’ was seen as already receiving ‘relatively good coverage’ in recent years – perhaps too much – and consequently, it was necessary to recuperate the ‘learning’ dimension of our work given that
the notion of ‘learning’ had recently become central in many contemporary debates and directions in tertiary education. Perhaps the most ‘prominent’ of the new ‘learnings’ is the flexible variety – but there are others that also dominate higher education discourses nowadays – ‘lifelong learning’; ‘student-centred learning’; ‘generic learning’; and ‘learning cultures’. (Crosling, et al., 1999, p1)

We could say that whereas a great deal of effort in previous conferences had attended to making sense of the language dimension of our work, this conference had a specific and focused concern for making sense of the learning dimension and includes some seminal papers in our field including Webb’s (2000) review of ‘Learning Theory’ and Taylor’s (2000) ‘The generic and the disciplined - can the universal and the particular be reconciled?’ Within this Proceedings, a section is dedicated to flexible learning where learning advisors, such as Moore and Clerehan (2000) report on a university level web-based essay writing project and comment on the growing trend in self-directed learning resources and begin to unpack the multiple considerations to be made in translating writing pedagogy to the online environment.

The development of online resources providing advice and modelled exemplars became an integral part of many learning advisor’s practice at this time. For example, in a paper entitled Providing the discipline context for skills development: report on the production of an interactive video for oral and visual communication in the biological sciences, Drury and Taylor (1999) report on their production of a video for modelling oral and visual communication in the biological sciences at the University of Sydney. In their paper, they argue

In the biological sciences, oral and visual communication are important modes for delivering knowledge and concepts but these skills are rarely taught. Although written guidelines may be given and discussed, presentations are seldom modelled or practised within the curriculum and students often learn through a negative first presentation. This video project was developed to ensure that all students within the School of Biological Sciences had access to advice and modelling of oral and visual communication within the context of their discipline from first to honours year. (Drury & Taylor, 1999, p1)

Another example is Teaching genres in the disciplines: can students learn the laboratory report genre on-screen? (Drury, 2001), also from the University of Sydney. This paper reports on the development of self-access online resources for teaching writing in the discipline,
This paper will illustrate the application of genre theory in the design of an onscreen program which aims to teach students how to write a laboratory report in three different disciplines, namely, biology, biochemistry and chemical engineering. This program provides guidelines, models, interactive exercises and feedback and takes into account the genre variations between these disciplines. (Drury, 2001, p1)

A third example is from the University of Wollongong, *Using computer technology to integrate instruction in discipline-specific literacy skills into the curriculum: A case study* (Trivett & Skillen, 1998), which ‘reports on the use of technology to supply instruction in skills, and to supply feedback to students about their development of skills, in a first year core Biology subject’. The online system was used to provide highly individualised feedback on a diagnostic assessment task and point them to self-access online resources specifically developed as integrated resources for that subject assessment. The final example is the development of an open access interactive online generic academic skills site called Unilearning64 using a $189,000 grant from the Centre for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) in 199865, (Pollock, Trivett, Skillen, Percy, & James, 2001).

Identifying how these changes swept through one university and required a more intense collaboration between the learning advising team, O’Regans’s (2001) *Doing it together: the pains and gains of collaborating to produce online resources*, identifies as part of a broader ‘re-invention of teaching and learning support’ (p1), ‘an increasing emphasis on online provision of services and resources… that are vigorously promoted…to the University community’ (p1). Online resources at this time came to be identified as the new panacea in higher education provision.

**Generic skills - tertiary literacy - graduate qualities**

Perhaps one of the most effective and insidious control strategies, however, has been the invention of generic skills, tertiary literacy and graduate qualities that could begin to isolate in

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64 http://unilearning.uow.edu.au
65 1998/9 Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) grant of $189,000 “Development of Interactive Unilearning Resources” Principal Investigator: Hampton, G, University of Wollongong, with M Merten, J Skillen, N Trivett, & A Percy, Learning Development, University of Wollongong; Grierson, J, University of Western Sydney; Perez, A, University of Melbourne.
the most positivistic sense, discrete capacities in the population required for development and assessment, but also centralise responsibility for deciding what counts as a university education. It can be argued that one of the initial reasons for developing the notion of generic skills was to diminish the autonomy of the disciplines in deciding what counted as a university education. It also represents for learning advisors a key tension in the nature of the work – as to whether the generic and the particular can be reconciled (Taylor, 1999; Cargill, 1999) – which again was clearly represented within the Monash Proceedings in 1999.

Concurrent with the generic skills mantra was the language of tertiary literacy and graduate qualities. Concerned with the key issues of participation and retention in the 1980s, Power, Robertson and Baker’s (1987) working paper *Success in Higher Education* identified a general lack ‘tertiary literacy skills’ (p50) as one of the top factors influencing the high attrition and failure rates among university students. Shielding universities from the responsibility of teaching tertiary literacy, however, blame for this fell largely to the failure of secondary education to prepare students for academic study. Despite their acknowledgement that writing is ‘inseparably related to content’ and ‘best learned in context’ (p57), their recommendation was ‘helping individuals begin to think and write like a professional person in a given specialisation’ (p57) before they actually arrived at university. This, they suggested, could be done through the design of a secondary school matriculation course which included seminars from higher education staff and support units. Interestingly, they shied away from foundations and bridging courses because they may have been seen as remedial in nature and a violation of the culture of high academic standards.

Power, et al.’s concern here usefully summarises the widely held view that tertiary literacy is essentially a remedial activity. Despite the radical changes that universities had undergone since the 1950s, it was a common belief that university students should already be keyed into the thinking and writing expectations of a professional specialisation by the time they arrive at university. Most importantly, it indicates that the teaching of tertiary literacy was not seen as the domain of the university, but of the secondary school. This view stands in stark contrast to those in the learning advising field, who in drawing on cultural analyses of the disciplinary communities (eg. Becher, 1989) and socio-linguistic theory (eg. Fairclough, 1989; Halliday, 1994; Ivanic, 1995; Kress, 1976; Luke & Gilbert, 1993), had been arguing that academic literacy is developmental, ongoing and necessarily situated in the immediate context of the learner.
In 1996, the First National Conference on Tertiary Literacy: Research and Practice (Golebiowski, 1997) was held at the Victoria University of Technology where the general agreement, at least among the language and literacy pedagogues and the ‘converted’ present, was that the locus for tertiary literacy instruction was not only the university’s responsibility, but a necessary policy focus and a mainstream component of the higher education curriculum (Baldauf, 1997). Not surprisingly, in the same year at the HERDSA conference, Fiocco (1996) reported her findings that despite this understanding by most specialists, at least for the discipline staff at her university, not much had changed since 1987.

At the University of Wollongong, a Working Party on Comprehensive Information Literacy was established in 1996, developing a comprehensive research report and trialling activities in different faculties. With a particular emphasis on information literacy, this report stated

The effective use of information and information technology is recognised by higher education institutions internationally as essential to the development of lifelong learning skills. It is also acknowledged that instructional methods which enhance lifelong learning depend on a student-centred approach and make use of resource-based and problem-based teaching. The University Education Committee's Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan outlines educational strategies and practices which foster the development of just such a teaching and learning environment in which the flexible delivery of subjects plays an increasing part….

The transition to such a teaching environment requires that students can engage in independent self-directed learning. Students need to be capable of assuming more responsibility for locating, and making critical and effective use of, information resources beyond traditional lectures and textbooks. The University has a responsibility to ensure there are pathways for students to acquire the necessary skills. It also has a responsibility to academic staff to provide them with advice and assistance on suitable ways to integrate the skills into each faculty's curriculum. (UOW, 1996, p24)

The Generic Skills Working Party was then established in 1997 to broaden the scope to include the ‘Attributes of a Graduate’ in the University’s Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan 1997 – 2000. The Report and Recommendations from the Generic Skills Working Party stated
The University has a strong commitment to realising these attributes. As a result it advocates the development of curricula aimed at assisting students to develop these attributes. The University recognises the central role which academic and support staff play in this process through the implementation of well-planned teaching and learning strategies, assessment procedures and support services. It also recognises that staff development and support are of fundamental importance to this process. (UoW, 1997, p1)

This Plan located learning advisors, along with the educational developers and librarians, as important partners to the faculties in this process. To facilitate this process, a Tertiary Literacies Skills Inventory, which combined the Attributes with a comprehensive list of literacies, was developed and incorporated into University’s subject approval process (Library, 2010).

At the time when I entered the field in 1996, to speak against the pedagogical logic of integration was to be mad, a little backward or just plain lazy. But speak against it some did. From within the field, what is interesting about this period is not the theoretical arguments for why language and learning should be embedded (see, for example, Chanock, 1994b; Golebiowski, 1997; Taylor, et al., 1988), but the arguments against it (Ballard, 1994; Craswell, 1994; Garner, 1997; Phillips, 1994), which were few and far between. For Ballard (1994), the distinctive role of the ‘study advisor’ was to interpret for the student, ‘the demands of the academic culture and its especial epistemology’ (p16), and was best achieved through a sustained focus on the student as a complex learner (our person-centred practices):

The focal point for study advisors should always be the student as a learner across a range of disciplines. Any concentration on the lecturers, the course content, academic discourse, a particular discipline, or even the desired educational outcomes in terms of students' generic skills and knowledge should be seen as merely contributory to that focus. (p16)

Besides, she argued, students were always far better learners that staff. In her view, our work would always be more effective when it focused on the student than on the curriculum or the professional development of the staff member. A similar point is made by Garner (1997) who questions the cost-benefit of the significant effort required in collaborative work to integrate ‘communication skills’ into the curriculum, only to leave it in the hands of staff that may not have the capacity to maintain the quality of the practices. This brings us to the effectiveness/efficiency tension in learning advising practices.
While the lifelong learning/ generic skills/ tertiary literacy/ graduate qualities agenda(s) can be seen as offering learning developers a platform to elevate their arguments for developmental and disciplinary language and learning development, it also entrapped their arguments in a skills discourse that continues to distort their pedagogical intentions. Identifying the bittersweet agency that this particular identity enables and constrains, Taylor (1994) illustrates how the notion of skill is the ghost that haunts and distorts the vision of an academic literacy pedagogy. In *Reshaping the Monash BA: Knowledge and skills in the first year Arts subjects*, Taylor reports on a project where he is invited to assist with the reshaping of the degree in line with the ‘generic skills’ agenda, but is frustrated by the emphasis on skills. On the one hand, he is encouraged to ‘work with faculty on the degree program to find ways to help students toward an explicit understanding of how knowledge in each discipline is acquired, practiced and communicated’, but he is constrained as he attempts to ‘find a way that doesn’t involve simply ‘grafting’ skills onto a course’ (p26).

The slippage in valuing practices as efficient and therefore ‘effective’ manifests in the birth of the learning advisor as ‘agent of change’ or ‘skills integrator’ from the discursive womb of ‘mass’ education and the mass-delivery imperative. Curriculum-integrated practices can claim that they are efficient: they are delivered to hundreds of students at once; they can be deemed effective if they are based on articulated learning design principles and the content of the subject; they are deemed equitable because everyone in the subject has access; and they promote self-reliance and independence because they presume it. Here is the rupture, so clearly spelt out between the agent of redemption and the agent of change. The relationship with the discipline staff member takes priority over the relationship with the student as a complex learner. But strangely, working in this way, learning advisors can feel they are making a significant difference to a larger number of students’ understandings, to the culture of the discipline, to the expertise of the staff member and to the university.

While the imperative to ‘make a difference’ by working on the curriculum is clothed in egalitarian sentiment – inclusivity and equity – it can also be seen as framed more by the governmental desire to transcend a ‘culture of dependency’. Drawing on Peters’ (2001, p62) work, the shift to curriculum-centred practices can be seen as a deliberately engineered shift from an emphasis on professional relationships to an emphasis on a type of scaffolded self-reliance. With the self-reliance as the end goal, person-centred practices are construed as
dependence-creating and therefore, not just inefficient, but also ineffective. In these terms, efficiency is equal to effectiveness. Institutionally, the risk of dependency can be avoided by providing services that create a distance between the ‘expert’ or ‘therapist’ and the client. The object of their practices is no longer the individual student, but the professional expertise of the discipline academic and the design of the curriculum, the resource at hand, or the learning opportunity to be designed.

An important voice in this debate is Kate Chanock’s who continues to argue the case for the individual consultation. In her paper *Autonomy or responsibility: same or different?* (Chanock, 2003a), she teases out the contradictions inherent in the correlation made between autonomy, responsibility and dependence. In essence, she makes the point that although we tend to equate student responsibility with student autonomy, students who recognise the extent of their learning needs and seek out the necessary assistance to address those needs cannot be argued to be anything other than responsible, although it is mostly construed as dependence.

**vi. Correspondence to the present**

‘...ALL is central to tertiary learning...it is our joint responsibility... ALL is integral to disciplinary content, and cannot be taught in isolation’.

AALL President (Barthel, 2007)

The correspondence to the present returns the reader to the voices of the present in order to identify how elements of *ACT-III* can be recognised in our discursive complexity. The paradox that this ACT brings to light is that which is discontinuous between the person-centred practices of the agent of redemption and the curriculum-centred practices of the agent of change. Whereas the mediation role in *ACT-I* was between the staff and students, and in *ACT-II* between the students and the discipline, in *ACT-III*, the mediation role shifts away from the student and locates itself between the discipline academic and the curriculum.

The shift in emphasis from working directly with students to working with discipline staff on the curriculum is evident in a number of learning advisor’s responses although a number of those interviewed still worked in units where the ‘agent of change’ as an institutionally sanctioned agency has not yet infiltrated. What is shown to correspond to the narratives in the present is: the existing tension between person-centred and student/ curriculum-centred
practices; the growing desire to work with staff rather than or, at least, in addition to students; and the emphasis on curriculum-integrated and resource-based practices for ‘scaffolding’ students towards ‘independent’ learning with an emphasis on graduate qualities, generic skills and academic literacy.

Despite the fact within the field that there is still a strong emphasis on the importance of person-centred practices, as shown in ACT-I and ACT-II, for a number of practitioners in the present, the individual consultation is regarded as a symbol of marginality, as one learning advisor suggests

…when I started [learning advising] I was sitting in an office and I would have five or six students booked in a day… and at the end of the day I would have an aching neck and shoulders and … and the frustration of being stuck on the margins, you know, always outside and always fixing up and waiting to be called on by some lecturer who is in serious strife with students. (6)

Although heavily contested, the belief that the individual consultation is labour-intensive, inefficient and remedial continues to repeat itself in the present. One learning advisor, for example, whose work involves the extensive provision of individual consultations in a large faculty recalled a meeting where the newly appointed Director of Teaching and Learning declared ‘the provision of language and academic skills is both arbitrary and inequitable’ (2). For another learning advisor, whose university had already made the decision not to continue with individual consultations, she suggested that prior to the decision

There were a substantial number of people here who didn’t want to do individual appointments anymore, who saw that as remedial anyway, rather than developmental. The main argument here was that it’s uneconomical and an equity issue, which I totally disagree with anyway. (11)

The focus on curriculum-integrated work and the emphasis on ‘efficiency’ have the effect of diminishing the provision of individual consultations; that is, as its value is downgraded, it risks taking on a form that is counter-productive. A good example of this where the individual consultation is pared back to a drop-in service, as one learning advisor lamented,

We do drop-ins which are awful, you see 4-5 students in an hour. Sometimes all they can do is cry into a tissue for 5 minutes. The drop-in is used for ‘diagnosis’, what are
the issues and what does this person need. Then decide most appropriate response to that. (7)

The agent of change is discursively different to the agent of redemption. The agent of change is more ‘proactive’ (2,4,10,11,14,18), actively seeking out ‘collaborations’ (10,11,12,14) with discipline staff, and working on the curriculum to facilitate students’ (first year) transition’ to independent learning by ‘scaffolding tasks’ (11,16) and making the academic literacy expectations ‘explicit’ (3,4,6,11,12,14).

In those units where the emphasis on ‘agent of change’ has not clearly infiltrated, some practitioners express a strong desire to move into a position where they can change things:

I would like to be much more closely aligned with the disciplines and be invited to participate in discussions about curriculum changes, about how to present materials, to be an integral part. I am very much on the periphery. My relationships with the school staff, teaching staff in the schools depends very much on individuals, and I often build up a very good relationship with someone and I become quite intimately involved in those sorts of discussions and then they leave … but then you start all over again. (2)

This neatly sums up the way in which learning advisors feel they have something to offer staff and students and yet: can find relatively few avenues to be heard because of the subordinate role they are expected to play; and find that they are constantly beginning again because of the dynamic nature of the work environment. The learning advisor quoted above went on to say,

I would like to be able to be proactive rather than reactive. But proactive is often seen again as interfering and being a botherer, so although I’d like to be more proactive, I’ve probably backed off a lot of that and I’m much more reactive… that doesn’t mean I won’t ring up someone and say I’ve just seen six students asking me the same question, there seems to be some misunderstanding here, or I’ve have had a situation where one student tells me the tutor has said you have got to have a minimum of 10 references and another student in another tutorial in the same unit will come in and say they have been told it is a minimum of 15… I don’t hesitate. I don’t know what to do about that, so I’ll ring up the coordinator and say there seems to be an issue, clear it up for me, which is my polite way of saying you’ve got a problem…. so that doesn’t stop me doing that, but at the same time, I don’t think I am very proactive. (2)
So on the one hand, being reactive or ‘not very proactive’ can be seen as negative, while for others, it may be regarded as positive. An example of the latter came from a learning advisor, who said quite proudly,

…we are basically a reactive type unit, you know, so when our colleagues out in the trenches come and ask us for help, we go and work with them. We don’t tend to go out looking for areas to work, but tend to respond when we are asked to be involved. There is probably a dozen areas where we have quite significant ongoing contact with colleagues and then new units come up, and in some cases we are involved in those… not by any decree or any plan, but again, in response… which means that our time is always well-spent. We don’t go around trying to tell people what to do. … we are able to be a reflector for the lecturers that we work with, them being able to sound out ideas, get feedback, we add in things when they ask us what sort of task could we put in here to achieve these goals, so we add ideas, provide feedback on ideas. (3)

For this learning advisor, her work with staff does not involve the imperative of change agency. If anything, it embodies the redemptive qualities that we saw in Chapter Four. Working with staff thus does not necessarily constitute change management: the difference may be simply whether or not you are positioned, or regard yourself, as responsible for making change happen, or whether you see your role as responding authentically to a perceived need.

A key discursive difference in the ‘agent of change’ is the central concern with discipline and faculty ownership. The planned and strategic collaborative development of sharable and sustainable resources is how the agent of change sees him/herself as ‘making a difference’, not to the individual per se, but to the learning environment:

The more we can think about design and shareability, the more possible it is to do something, document it, communicate it and then give it to others to own and to not be in this position of it being expected forever to do something which, frankly, other people should be taking onboard. [We can say to discipline staff] these students have specific needs that, at the moment, you don’t feel comfortable to address. We can help think about the design of the teaching and learning, the tasks, the assessment practices, the resources that are there, the dialogues that might need to happen, the technologies that can support that. We can help you for one, two, maybe three, iterations. But after that… Like, if it’s really well-documented, communicated, explained and it’s really shareable, then there’s no reason why it doesn’t just become part and parcel of what they do. There’s no need for this unarticulated expectation that you will just be
rung up in week two and told that you’re running the tutorials in whatever subject.
(12)

For those involved in change agency, the approach can be highly rewarding, such as this learning advisor who reports on his/her success in embedding and fostering the ownership of integrated online resources into first year subjects,

When I started working at [Y campus] in 2000… we were working very closely with the professional development person and had a fantastic Dean of Teaching & Learning, and what we would do with the core courses in Business, we would get involved in course redevelopment and that was so good, because we would be working one to one with the students, so we would find out what the issues were, we might run the workshop, talk to the staff, talk to the lecturers, and then we’d get a chance to incorporate changes, or talk to them about maybe some changes in the kinds of assessment tasks, the wording of the assessment tasks, so we were actually able to embed things into the core courses in Business. And most of that stuff has stayed there. So much so that when years later I’ve returned there, [and] we are not doing much for the core courses anymore, you know, we are not called on to run workshops, its all happening there, we don’t even see a lot of the students from the core courses…we still have online workshops which are embedded in the core courses. (8)

However, for many engaged in change agency the story is not necessarily a happy one. While change agency is enabling for the learning advisor, it can also be a source of despair. Where, for example, the learning advisor reluctantly becomes ‘a tool of management for change’(6), or where perhaps she is co-opted by managerial recipes for change that fail to recognise the ‘embryonic, organic’(6) nature of these practices. The experience can be demoralising. Further, whether or not it is an institutionally sanctioned agency, in the main it continues to be a bottom-up approach. Despite the rhetoric, it has always been a case of learning advisors behaving like ‘agents of change’, usually with very little structural institutional support, as one learning advisor makes clear,

I felt like I was going out every study period with a stick over my shoulder and a little board and you would go and collect things from staff and try and make relationships and ask, ‘well what can we do for the students?’…but always a margin dweller…and I would find it so frustrating…then you would sort of negotiate a program and you would have to find a classroom and get the materials and slowly, slowly persuade them that you couldn’t just teach students about essay writing, you had to talk about the question… slowly, slowly, because they are very protective of their area. (6)
Even in units where change agency is institutionally sanctioned, there are significant constraints on infiltrating discipline activities, ‘it’s not very systematic’ (11). As agents of change, the learning advisor has very little influence, even where there is evidence that change might improve the students’ understanding of their assignments (8). For some practitioners, ‘the agent of change’ is powerless beyond small and fleeting instances of influence, ‘…it [is] a way of trying to put things in place so that they stay there, but they don’t stay there’ (6). This is partly because these practices depend so heavily on establishing and negotiating relationships and maintaining a subordinate role to the lecturing academics that we work with: ‘…you need fantastic relationships with staff… as long as they feel that you are not imposing…as long as they feel you are not telling them what to do or giving them lots of work to do… that is my experience’ (6).

The emphasis on personalities and relationships is evident in all learning advising narratives. The role, whether as agent of redemption or agent of change, is necessarily relational and always dependent on the success of relationships and the personalities involved. And yet, this principle can be openly flouted by management, as in one unit which has

   …a policy of shifting us around campuses, so it is always different….its bad because you lose your relationships, like if people come back next year and say I’d like to work with [me, for example], and they say well she has gone somewhere else, and they say ‘oh’. (5)

In addition, but also related to the tension between person-centred and curriculum-centred practices, is the growing emphasis on online resources and the use of technology in teaching. The way this impacted on the learning advisor is clear in an interview with one learning advisor, where she mused over the fact that in the mid-nineties, she had been perplexed by her supervisor’s insistence that she do something innovative but could not articulate what that might look like, and was fortunate enough to have stumbled upon the new panacea – the online resource

   …by chance we wrote the very first course specific online resource because we couldn’t get to see the students face to face and that is how it all started, and she sent a message to the Vice Chancellor saying ‘look at what my staff are doing’…so she couldn’t tell us what she wanted but she could recognise it. (11)
The way that the practices of ACT-I, ACT-II and ACT-III come together in the statements we make about ourselves appear in the kind of description that a learning advisor gives of him/herself,

I am a learning advisor, so I do lots of different things. I assist students one to one for assignment help, or help with referencing, or anything to do with that, those study problems, time management, how to study, that kind of thing. I also prepare resources to put up on the web or online workshops to go with courses and assignment work, and I give face to face workshops at the request of lecturers or whoever needs it, like orientation workshops, generic workshops on referencing or writing an essay, or specific workshops tailored to students assignments. (5)

Although such a statement appears to entail a level of coherence, it does in fact entail a deep rupture in terms of the object of practices and the agency of the learning advisor to make a difference.

ACT-III Summary

In summary, the discourse of lifelong learning handed learning advisors a platform on which they could elevate the status of their work from the vexing status of remedial tutors. Riding the advantages of the academic and employability skills discourses during the 1990s, learning advisors would triple in numbers servicing equity and international students alongside the lifelong learner. With student diversity and quality as the twin discourses they could draw on, the integration of lifelong learning skills into the curriculum became a privileged practice, at least in some universities. At Wollongong University, for example, the IDEALL (Skillen et al, 1998) approach was developed in 1998 which created a binary divide between person-centred practices and curriculum intervention, the latter being regarded as the most efficient and effective. These practices tended to target first year core subjects and entail the development of embedded diagnostic assessment, online and self-directed learning resources for ‘scaffolding’ the independent lifelong learner.
ACT-IV An administrative and pedagogical intervention for the graduate

ACT-IV Introduction

ACT-IV demonstrates a rupture in the learning advising identity from a curriculum intervention for the lifelong learner to an administrative and pedagogical intervention for the ‘Graduate’. While this latter identity is somewhat continuous of the governmental reasoning that emerged in ACT-III, ACT-IV represents an intensification of that reasoning that introduces a secondary policy preoccupation, one with quality and validation. This ACT demonstrates how the learning advisor as an administrative and pedagogical intervention for the quality assurance of the ‘Graduate’ emerged out of the imperatives for internal and external validation of the educational ‘product’ as the university was transformed into a full-service enterprise and international exporter in the 1990s. This ACT illustrates how the ‘Graduate’ came to appear as a statement of proposed educational outcomes, ‘attributes’ or ‘qualities’ that on one level can be said to prescribe the educated subject, but ultimately function as one means for product differentiation, a marketing tool for inter-university competition, and an insidious mechanism for the pedagogical reform of higher education according to the perceived demands of the emerging ‘globalised knowledge economy’. The argument put forth in this ACT is that while the Graduate Qualities agenda provides a useful vehicle for learning advisors whose central tenet is to promote embedded academic literacy development, the work learning advisors are called on to do is increasingly co-opted by the managerial and marketing discourses that render their practices administrative and actuarial on the one hand, and pedagogical [read outsourced teaching] on the other.
**ACT-IV** identifies the university operating in an environment where: neoliberal political rationality converges with the phenomenon of globalisation; the consumer perspective becomes a dominant frame for valuing higher education; educational policy-making tends to occur in transnational spaces; and anxiety over an institution’s national and global ranking and competitiveness governs local reform. Welcome to the university as ‘full-service enterprise’ (Reinecke, 1995) - the performative university of excellence. The university as ‘full-service enterprise’ is arguably the product of fundamentalist neoliberal thinking that has reconfigured ‘society’ for ‘citizens’ into a ‘marketplace’ for ‘consumers’. It is a place where demonstrating ‘excellence’ and ‘adding value’ to a university’s reputation is of the highest order, and where reputation is measured by a wide array of internationally-derived indicators of institutional efficiency and ‘social progress’ (OECD, 2010). In the higher education sector, the ‘Graduate’ is the quality-assured product, the deliverable of the Australian university operating in the global education market, where Australian universities are regarded as some of the most aggressive negotiators for free trade and insistent marketers of their wares (Marginson, 2004; Robertson, 2003; Ziguras, 2003).

If the tension between quality and diversity in the commodification of higher education defined the contingency of **ACT-III**, the tension between standardisation and specialisation in the performative university defines the contingency of **ACT-IV**. As universities seek to live up to the demands of ‘world markets in international education and intellectual property’ (Marginson, 1999, p5) and compete internationally, the twin imperatives of quality assurance and product differentiation define what it means to add value to the university. They also define in quite serious terms what it means to be an ‘effective academic’, an ‘excellent practice’ and a ‘quality graduate’.

What may be unexpected in this ACT about the Graduate, however, is that although the ‘qualities’ as a set of student attributes could be explored in terms of how they are used to police student identity, I am more interested in the way they are used to police the higher education institution as a whole. That is, in this ACT, I am less interested in exploring the effect of the Qualities on the student, and more interested in how they are wielded as a lever for educational reform.
i. The university as full-service enterprise

This section locates the emergence of the learning advisor as an administrative and pedagogical intervention for quality assuring the ‘Graduate’ in the first decade of the new millennium, where international competition, transnational policy making and university rankings are the defining elements of a ‘globalised’ higher education market. It will be shown that in the convergence of neoliberalism as the defining political rationality for national and international governance, globalisation as a geo-political phenomenon, the effects of the so-called knowledge economy on labour formation, and the need to ground higher education funding in private sources, the university was transformed into a full-service enterprise and a major exporter of educational products. It is argued that this particular configuration of the university is governed by a performative regime that demands attention to reputation and ranking, and whose economic and political imperative is to differentiate itself as an educational product and demonstrate ‘quality’ to qualify for competition. It is here that the learning advisor as agent of change is invited to assist in the quality assurance of the teaching and learning environment through administrative and pedagogical processes.

Neoliberalism and globalisation

In 2005, at the Sustaining Prosperity Conference at the University of Melbourne, the Minister for Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, gave an address that neatly captured the neoliberal agenda for higher education. In the address, he stated,

If Australia is to remain internationally competitive, we must foster all aspects of our social and economic framework, and most vitally, build on our higher education system and ensure it is nationally consistent, high quality and flexible. While Australia already has an internationally competitive higher education system, other countries are investing and transforming their systems. The challenge is to make sure our system not only stays internationally competitive, but that our best universities are in the top tier of world rankings. Universities must continue to diversify, and to foster creativity, great teaching and research. At the same time our universities must be responsive to the needs of their local students and communities. (Nelson, 2005, p4)

The imperative for top world rankings, consistency, quality, flexibility, diversification and responsiveness, neatly capture the way in which universities are to be transformed according to the logic of international competition and enterprise.
The present condition of the university as a full-service enterprise is arguably the epitome of neoliberal thought which perceives the ‘social’ and the ‘citizen’ as ‘market’ and ‘consumer’, and is centrally concerned with regulating autonomy and responsibility in the population. As a political mode of reasoning, neoliberalism stands in moral opposition to socialism and collectivism promoting instead individualism and the free market as the necessary conditions for freedom. Hayek neatly captures this as a social and economic philosophy in the following quote:

The only moral principle which has ever made the growth of an advanced civilisation possible was the principle of individual freedom…No principles of collective conduct which binds the individual can exist in a society of free men. (Hayek, 1979, pp152-3 cited in Rose, 1999, pp63-4)

In opposition to socialism, neoliberal reasoning is concerned with reorganising ‘social relations around a notion of [national, organisational and individual] enterprise’ (McNay, 2009, p56). Studies of governmentality, and in particular the work of Rose (1999) in Powers of Freedom, demonstrate how neoliberalism employs technologies of freedom as a contemporary form of power to cultivate in the population the values and dispositions amenable to its own logic: freedom becomes ‘the prescription for rule: … both the ethos and the techné of government’ (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p315). Dean (1999) suggests that this ‘appeal to freedom is made because security depends on the constitution of individuals, professionals., communities, organisations and institutions as sites for the exercise of a ‘responsible autonomy’ that can be indirectly regulated by the technologies of performance’ (p196). Where freedom in liberal society is generally secured through ‘rights’ and ‘legislation’, neoliberalism employs technologies of freedom [read autonomy and responsibility] that oblige one to be free - to be enterprising, to take risks, to make independent choices, and to be responsible for those choices.

Accordingly, neoliberal governments insist on ‘freedom, choice, consumer sovereignty, competition and individual initiative’ (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p314): that is, they ‘psychologically police citizens to become enterprising selves irrespective of class barriers’ (Rose, 1990 in Lakes, 2008). Becoming an ‘entrepreneurial self’, according to Peters (2001), requires establishing a relationship ‘to oneself through forms of personal investment and insurance’ (p60) as an ethical obligation as a free citizen. In this sense, the entrepreneurial self, the responsibilised individual, applies ‘certain management, economic, and actuarial
techniques to themselves as subjects of a newly privatised welfare regime’ (Peters, 2001, p60).

Extending the principles of market liberalism that we saw in ACT-III to their logical conclusion, neoliberalism is arguably a more contrived version of market freedom: that is, it involves the creation of markets where there were none, and reduces everything that can have value to a commodity that can be bought and sold. Neoliberalism is ultimately concerned with privatisation: for the individual, this includes the privatisation of capital, cost, responsibility, choice, welfare and most importantly, risk; and for the public sector, this means a continued transformation of public institutions and services into market enterprises and risk-taking ventures (see Davies, et al., 2006).

The institutionalisation and individualisation of risk is a key theme that is taken up in this ACT. While risk consciousness had entered the academic psyche in Australia during the 1960s with the notion of the student at risk of failing, it takes another form here. In neoliberal terms, risky behaviour is simultaneously a social and economic imperative and an individual burden: a good neoliberal subject is willing to take risks and live with the consequences (Tikly, 2003). This ACT will demonstrate the way this manifests as a redistribution of risk from the State to the organisation and from the organisation to the individual. For the learning advisor, the responsibility for making a difference to the ‘student at risk’ that we saw in Chapter 3 will be shown to have shifted to making a difference to the ‘organisation at risk’.

Under a neoliberal regime, civil society is argued to be produced through a range of micro-mechanisms – contrived competition (Burchell, 1996), contrived collegiality (Edwards, 2000; Harvey & Newton, 2004), manufactured risk (Peters, 2001), contrived emotionality (Humes, 2000) and self-responsibilisation. In this context, the domain of government becomes less the balancing of differences between its constituents that we saw in Chapter Four, and more the balancing of those quantifiable and measureable differences within and between national economies in the face of growing international competition, mobilised through the discursive lever of ‘globalisation’ and the uptake of the OECDs comparative measurements of social and
economic progress (see for example, OECD, 1976\textsuperscript{66}, 1982\textsuperscript{67}; ABS, 1980\textsuperscript{68}; Parliament of the COA, 1982\textsuperscript{69}).

The university as full-service enterprise is arguably the product of neoliberal thought leveraged through the realities and discourses of ‘globalisation’ (for further discussion see Porter & Vidovich, 2001; Olssen & Peters, 2005). The link between neoliberalism and globalisation is one that needs to be carefully considered. Olssen & Peters (2005) suggest that we should not confuse neoliberalism with globalisation but see them as two distinct and intensely intertwined geo-political phenomena. Whereas neoliberalism is what Olssen and Peters (2005) refer to as ‘a specific economic discourse…which has become dominant in world economic relations as a consequence of super-power sponsorship’ (p314), they regard it as an element of globalisation rather than a cause or effect. It is possible to think of globalisation in non-neoliberal terms. Indeed, globalisation is not a fixed or broadly accepted term by any means: see Porter & Vidovich (2001) for discussion of a range of interpretations; Marginson (1999c) for an alternative definition of globalisation to ‘world market’; Appadurai (2000) for a cogent discussion of ‘grassroots globalisation’; and Vidovich & Slee (2001) for a discussion on how global policy does not always directly translate nationally. At this point in history, however, it is difficult to discern clearly between the two given that neoliberalism has been the dominant political rationality that has shaped the form that ‘globalisation’ as a discursive, economic, philosophical and political phenomenon has taken.

For the purposes of this thesis, I view globalisation as a ‘regime of truth’ as it is propagated by the OECD, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (Currie, 1996; Davies, et al., 2006; Porter & Vidovich, 2001). I do this because I am concerned with examining how these transnational policy making bodies delimit the sayable and thinkable in the higher education sector. Further, these international bodies that represent themselves as neutral arbiters of international affairs naturalise the discourse of globalisation as ‘world trade’ and actively promote the production of transnational comparisons and policy through their many

\textsuperscript{67} OECD 1982. \textit{The OECD list of social indicators.} OECD Publications and Information Center, Paris.
and varied research, policy and aid groups (Moutsios, 2010), and this has profound effects on the higher education systems of member countries. Moutsios (2010) makes a similar point in his statement,

Transnational institutions call on education systems to create the most ‘competitive knowledge-based economy in the world’ (EU), to present high scores in production-related subjects and skills (OECD), to focus on human capital production (World Bank) or to become ‘educational services’ opened up to foreign investments (WTO). (p128)

Today, the OECD describes itself inside its publications as a cooperative of 30 countries facing the challenges of globalisation together,

The OECD is a unique forum where the governments of 30 democracies work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. (OECD, 2010c, p11)

It also continues to naturalise the application of managerial and marketing discourses to education through research and publications. Consider, for example, the way in which the language of the globalised knowledge economy is used to frame the purpose and value of education in the following excerpt from Higher Education and Regions: Globally Competitive, Locally Engaged (OECD, 2007):

In order to be competitive in the globalising knowledge economy [world trade?], the OECD countries need to invest in their innovation systems [universities?] at the national and regional levels. As countries are turning their production [education?] towards value-added segments [student learning?] and knowledge-intensive products and services [courses?], there is greater dependency on access to new technologies, knowledge and skills [learning outcomes?]’ (OECD, 2007, p11) [my additions]

In the knowledge economy, the people, processes and products of the university take on an vocabulary that emphasises their efficiency, quality and standardisation. It is through neoliberal concepts and terminology that these ‘managerial bureaucracies’ (Moutsios, 2010) promote international trade, comparison and competition among higher education institutions and shape the nature educational reform in the name of economic and social freedom.
Education as a major driver in a globalised knowledge economy

The point being made in this section is that through the reports and conference proceedings of these transnational managerial bureaucracies, tertiary education has been positioned as a ‘major driver of economic competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy’ (OECD, 2008b, p13). Although reform tends to be couched in a type of egalitarian sentiment, the focus is more on managing the shape of labour formation through the standardisation of measures of educational ‘outcomes’ and notions of ‘quality’. The UNESCO (1998) World Conference on Higher Education, for example, produced a World Declaration On Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action, where it summoned the Human Rights declaration that everyone has the right to education and asserted that its aim was to provide ‘solutions to [key] challenges and [set] in motion a process of in-depth reform in higher education worldwide’ (p1). Although this aim embodies UNESCO’s humanitarian sentiment and democratic ideals (Allport, 2000), a more telling brief comes from the associated reforms promoted through the OECD that emphasise employability, skills and standardisation as key to international competitiveness and economic growth.

The emphasis on employability, skills and standardised measurable outcomes is evident in the proceedings of the Outcomes of Higher Education: Quality, Relevance and Impact Conference (OECD, 2008a), which was particularly concerned with the impact of reputation and ranking on institutional strategy, and the assessment of learning and employment outcomes ‘on an international comparative perspective’ (no page). Likewise, the Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society Report (OECD, 2008b) argued that ‘the imperative for [OECD] countries is to raise higher-level employment skills to sustain a globally competitive research base and to improve knowledge dissemination to the benefit of society’ (p13). The Conference on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy, Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies (OECD, 2009) aimed to: consider ‘the measurement of social progress…beyond conventional economic measures; enhance a culture of evidence-based decision making…; strengthen citizen’s capacity to influence the goals of their society; and increase the accountability of public policies’ (no page).

Perhaps the most telling, however, is the correlation made between economic growth and the quality of learning outcomes in The High Cost of Low Educational Performance: The long-run economic impact of improving PISA outcomes (OECD, 2010b). This report from the
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)\textsuperscript{70} whose remit is to develop increasingly standardised measures for testing and comparing students’ ‘skills’ across nations, ‘uses recent economic modelling to relate cognitive skills – as measured by PISA and other international instruments – to economic growth’ (p6). Despite their reservations about the instability of economic modelling and the reliability of standardised testing, the report claims that ‘a modest goal of having all OECD countries boost their average PISA scores by 25 points over the next 20 years …implies an aggregate gain of OECD GDP of USD 115 trillion over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010…’(p6). The report makes clear that ‘it is the quality of learning outcomes, not the length of schooling, which makes the difference’ (p6). The imperative is to maintain a quality learning environment that can up-skill a nation’s population, to increase employability and thus individual earnings, in order to remain globally competitive. The underlying belief appears to be that by advancing the nation in economic terms, social benefits will result, and that by increasing the regulatory mechanisms to account for outcomes and quality, the nature of teaching and learning will be reformed accordingly.

Through the lens of governmentality, it is possible to see that locating the quality of learning outcomes as the dependent variable in economic growth requires an assurance of outcomes, which in turn requires a much more structured and stringent quality environment where measurement. Lakes (2008) provides a useful critique of this from a US perspective, suggesting that we are witnessing the re-emergence of a meritocratic system where being educated is narrowly defined along neoliberal lines in terms of an economic definition of skill ‘as rigid and formal, rational and measurable’ (no page), and being employable is considered the result of ‘proper choices, exhibited motivation and effort at studying, and carefully planned … educational and workplace pathways’ (no page).

The emphasis on efficiency, accountability and standards-based measures implores the quality agenda to integrate a more stringent performance-based model for accounting for outcomes (Lakes, 2008). Drawing on the work of Connell, Lakes argues that the neoliberal agenda

\textsuperscript{70} ‘In response to the need for cross-nationally comparable evidence on student performance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 1997. PISA represents a commitment by governments to monitor the outcomes of education systems in terms of student achievement on a regular basis and within an internationally agreed common framework. It aims to provide a new basis for policy dialogue and for collaboration in defining and implementing educational goals, in innovative ways that reflect judgements about the skills that are relevant to adult life’. (OECD, 2010, p3)
pushes the values of the middle class, while the working class are required to reinvent themselves along middle-class lines. Whether or not we ‘do’ class is less important than considering his point about how inequity is built into the project of freedom in the knowledge economy. This brings us back to Edward’s (2004) comment that in the neoliberal learning society, the expectation is that one will consume one’s way out of poverty and into a good job through the education market.

Adding fire to this point, Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) draw attention to the impact of consumerism in higher education on the labour market. They argue that the ramping up of mass high education to produce skilled workers for a knowledge economy involves a misrecognition of how capitalist development works. According to Brown and Lauder (2003), these jobs are only available for an elite group as the so-called ‘knowledge’ jobs become routinised. A university degree thus only provides the opportunity to compete for a knowledge job, perpetuating existing and creating new forms of social inequality. However, while employability as a means for international competitiveness is an important driver, the university as full-service enterprise exceeds this particular imperative.

Education as a major export industry

Despite the humanitarian sentiment and the democratic ideals about educating the population and improving employability, the university as full-service enterprise is equally the product of a growing export industry in education, and this forms the complementary imperative towards ‘quality assurance’ of a university education. The status of the university as a full-service enterprise can be traced back to the formal recognition of higher education as a marketable and exportable service in 1995 by the World Trade Organisation and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (Robertson, 2003). This might appear to count for little and change nothing in particular, as Australian higher education had been functioning as an export service long before this date; however, it marked a formalisation of the commercialisation of higher education (see Griffin-Cohen, 1999) with legal implications and obligations that threatened the sovereignty of nation states over public policy and institutions (Kelsey, 2003), and as such raised loud and large concerns all over the world. Despite the bad press it received, particularly around the GATS negotiations in the mid to late 1990s (see Robinson,
2006 for discussion), and the more recent attempts to counter this (Osterwalder, 2009; Sauvé, 2002), the global export of education has become one of Australia’s largest industries.

Indeed, Australia has been pro-active, some would even say ‘aggressive’, in fostering its education system as a service export enterprise in the name of internationalisation and globalisation (see Marginson, 2004; Robinson, 2006; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Ziguras, Reinke, & McBurnie, 2003). The perceived benefits of strengthening higher education as an export market include the income from student fees, the development of global knowledge and employer networks, and the provision of a skilled workforce engaging with the international community (Allport, 2000). It would seem that with significantly diminishing public funding, there were also few other choices.

Government funding of higher education had decreased significantly in real terms as post-secondary education was increasingly being interpreted as a private investment rather than a public one. The institutional funding per student derived from the Commonwealth operating fund stood at 90 per cent in the 1970s, 86 per cent in 1986, 57 per cent in 1996, and 40 per cent by 2001 (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Considine, 2001; Marginson, 2004). The most telling statistic is the rise in the total income universities earned from full-fee paying students during the period from 1992–1999: for Australian fee-paying students, the income rose by 450%, from $27.7 million to 124.5 million; for international students, the income rose by 145%, from $285.9 million to 415 million (Gallagher, 2000, p13). As public funding diminished, private funding rose.

Actively marketing itself as an internationally exportable service/commodity, higher education in Australia has submitted itself to the deregulation and reregulation of the transnational policy environment. For example, the World Bank’s Report on Higher Education (1994) encouraged universities to diversify their sources of funding, to be less dependent on the State, and encouraged the State to more closely link funding to performance, privatise higher education and foster differentiation among universities (cited in Currie, 1996, p3). Allport (2000, pp39-40) identifies the strategies promoted by the World Bank and picked up by the Australian Government in the development of policy and process in Australian higher education. These strategies include: the diversification of funding; performance-based funding; changes to the curriculum, pedagogy and institutional governance through the instruments of evaluation and accreditation; and a focus on science and technology.
The rhetoric of the full-service enterprise in Australia has been consistent for over a decade. At the National Scholarly Communications Forum in Canberra, 21-22 October 1996, the Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Dr Ian Reinecke, presented a paper entitled ‘Universities as service sector enterprises’. His paper was concerned with the kinds of information and communication management strategies universities employed as they identified themselves as ‘full-service universities’ and located themselves squarely ‘within the service sector of the economy’ (p1). According to Reinecke (1996),

Some universities that have decided they are service industry players have already begun to think about how to plan and structure their institutions as service enterprises. They will have recognised that universities that regard themselves this way will be participating in highly competitive markets where there are higher potential rewards and commensurately higher risk. (p1)

What is most disturbing about his rhetoric is the way he concludes his paper,

If they do not transform themselves into full-service enterprises providing education and research services, the opportunity exists for other organisations to do so. And whether they call themselves universities may not matter to their customers. (Reinecke, 1997, p7).

Like the *Universities under scrutiny* (OECD, 1986) document, here again universities are duly warned about the consequences of not reinventing themselves as the global educational marketplace creates its own trajectory.

Along similar lines, in 1996 Senator Amanda Vanstone, Australia's Minister for Education said: "to survive and prosper in a rapidly changing world, universities must embrace the marketplace and become customer-focused business enterprises" (cited in Currie, 1996, p2). In September 2000, Michael Gallagher71 in his aptly entitled *The Emergence of Entrepreneurial Public Universities in Australia*, describes the public enterprise university as ‘a multi-million dollar academic enterprise’, contributing ‘to the national innovation system’, producing ‘graduates with relevant capabilities’, and ‘taking on new forms’ with a more flexible mode of existence (p1). These new forms of flexible existence would also need to be closely regulated, as the Minister for Education, Science and Training, The Hon Brendan

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71 Michael Gallagher, First Assistant Secretary of the Higher Education Division, OECD
Nelson, suggested in 2005: ‘the market for private higher education will be opened up, while still enhancing quality control’ (Nelson, 2005). Deregulation, it seems, requires reregulation.

Further, the use of a services logic transforms not just the function of the university but its regulatory and symbolic environment as well. For an industry that has come to rely heavily on growth in exports, a preoccupation with maintaining and improving reputation and status on a global scale drives national decision-making, policy and resourcing issues. The quality assurance agenda is designed specifically to feed the demands of the knowledge economy and export industry but sits in tension with the material and operational realities of the national higher education context.

There is a particular irony that should be pursued here. Underpinning deregulation is the vast array of reregulation that governs the conduct of universities, its personnel and its students in the name of quality, efficiency and accountability. As the higher education sector becomes increasingly deregulated at a global level, it submits itself to a more intense regulatory environment at the national and international level as protocols, measures, and standards are articulated and legislated to ensure the ‘quality’ and ‘freedom’ of provision. The targets, measures, outcomes – the technologies of control – audit and evaluation – the individual incentives for workplace reform, teaching awards and research output – are all policy driven agendas for reform established at a transnational level to promote competition among individuals and institutions, and ultimately to identify some countries and institutions as more reliable producers and exporters over others.

In this context, the imperative for the Governments of OECD nations to establish a high quality education system that is willing to take on its responsibilities as the major driver of economic growth requires the establishment of a quality assurance environment that is sensitive to risk. In fine neoliberal form, both responsibility and risk for this are shifted on to individual institutions who invest in themselves to stay nationally and internationally competitive, if not simply relevant and viable (Bessant, et al., 2003; Davies, et al., 2006; Marginson, 2007).
ii. Problematising quality assurance

In ACT-III, we saw the problematisation of university education as failing in its task of producing the employable graduate, which extended the lens of the governmental gaze beyond the individual and social group to the higher education curriculum. It was here that the graduate began to appear as a set of capacities and dispositions, the indirect object of intervention, as the higher education curriculum became the target of reform. In ACT-IV, we witness an intensification of the regulatory gaze of the higher education curriculum and its extension to the higher education professional as the geo-political context in which universities attempt to operate induces a particular anxiety, not over quality so much as assurance, or perhaps more appropriately, insurance against risk. In this section, another layer of the learning advising complex is shown to emerge in their intelligibility as an important administrative and pedagogical intervention for the quality assurance of the ‘Graduate’ inside the university’s anxiety over the perception of ‘risk’ in an increasingly de/reeregulated, diversifying, expanding and increasingly fragmented educational environment. In essence, the quality agenda demanded that universities develop a performative regime to demonstrate quality of outcomes in order to qualify for competition in an expanding educational market in the globalised knowledge economy.

*Thinking about quality through the language of risk*

Although not necessarily explicit, the quality of higher education is problematised largely in terms of the risk discourse that operates as an important technology of performance in neoliberal governance. The performance technologies of risk assessment and risk management – prediction and control - the assessment and regulation of potential deviance or waste in relation to pre-defined standards and regularities, lay at the heart of neoliberal governance. Risk management in these terms involves the development of knowledge and strategies that seek to control risk by attempting to structure it out of existence. Bessant, Hill and Watts (2003) argue that with the shift to neoliberal governance, the sociology of deviance is replaced by the science of risk, where the ‘stable social and moral order called ‘society’ [is displaced by] the normality of restructuring, change, and the ‘death of the nation-state’ in the wake of globalisation’ (p16). Importantly, risk consciousness orients institutions and individuals ‘toward the future, toward considerations of risk in the future, and toward the
conditions and practices for managing and controlling risks on the future (Robertson, 1999, p281). Risk strategies thus seek greater control over the desires of citizens and the shape of the environment in which risk is seen to be occurring.

Managing and controlling risk in Australian higher education can be identified through the layering of quality control strategies. These included internal processes of validation, beginning with the identification of various measures of quality and efficiency in higher education in the mid 1980s, and the introduction of self-regulation, performance-based funding, inter-university competition, corporate governance and strategic management in the 1990s. By 2000, this regulatory environment was further intensified through the additional layering of external validation processes. This move was said to be necessary to maintain the international standard of Australian higher education in what had become regarded as a radically changed operational environment. The external processes included accreditation through the National Protocols (MCEETYA, 2007) and validation through the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)72.

What had become problematised is not simply the quality of higher education, but the paperwork that demonstrates it – the goals, the indicators and the evidence. Demonstrating quality to external assessors, after all, required comprehensive documentation of the performance of quality. It is here that the university course appears as a design to be aligned, the curriculum a process to be mapped, student learning support a box to be ticked, and teaching excellence an award to be won. In order to demonstrate how the quality agenda reregulated the university, the historical layering of control strategies in the name of quality are outlined below.

**Control strategy 1: Accounting for quality**

The first comprehensive set of actuarial techniques for accounting for quality in Australian higher education can be said to have emerged out of a risk assessment conducted by the *Study Group on the Measurement of Quality and Efficiency in Australian Higher Education* (Linke, Birt, Fensham, Scott, & Smith, 1984). Seeking a new empiricism for establishing quality and

72 [http://www.auqa.edu.au/](http://www.auqa.edu.au/)
efficiency in higher education, their report identified a total lack of systemic documentation and accounting of the various elements that could be deduced as ‘quality’ in universities. Among its recommendations was the urgent need for the sector to ‘extend the collection of statistical information’ to include measures of student demand, student background data, academic progress, staff workload allocations, research productivity, resource provision, and sources and proportions of income (pv). The collection of such data would begin to build a standard picture by which the ‘quality’ of university performance could be measured and compared.

Over the next two decades, a proliferation of performance indicators and increasingly sophisticated accounting and reporting systems ensued. For example, in 1986, the Federal Government’s Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education (CTEC, 1986) divided Performance Indicators into internal (graduation rates), operating (class size), research (publications) external (employment destinations) (Hattie, 1990). In 1994, 41 indicators were introduced in the Government report Diversity and Performance of Australian Universities (DEET, 1994). This increased to 68 indicators in Diversity of Australian Higher Education (DEET, 1996), and by 1998, this had become 360 indicators in complex configurations in The Characteristics and Performance of Higher Education Institutions (DETYA, 1998) (See DEST, 2001). In time, increasingly more nuanced ways of measuring and comparing ‘outcomes’ had been deduced. By 2008, the quality assurance of teaching and learning in Australian universities could be presented as a multi-dimensional performance model, as evident in Chalmers’ (2008) presentation to the OECD regarding ‘Teaching and learning quality indicators in Australian universities’.

Control strategy 2: Self-regulation and performance-based funding

The more formalised quality movement in Australian higher education emerged out of Baldwin’s73 (1991) Higher Education Quality and Diversity in the 1990s, which promoted processes of self-accreditation and ‘voluntary’ self-assessment. This phase focused on identifying gaps in procedure and developing an appropriate quality infrastructure and

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73 The Hon. Peter Baldwin, MP, Minister for Higher Education and Employment Services
process. Universities would report directly to the Government with their institutional portfolios and equity plans, which functioned as technologies of performance for regulating the conduct of universities. Although ‘voluntary’, between 1993 and 1995, universities were encouraged to engage in the self-assessments of the Quality Assurance Program and demonstrate ‘a high level of quality assurance in the context of their mission and goals’ (DETYA, 2000, p2) in order to qualify for funding over and above the allocated institutional operating grant. It was in this first round that ‘the Graduate’ as the ultimate deliverable of higher education began to appear as a list of qualities – values, skills and attitudes – in the institutional educational portfolios around which negotiation with Government for ongoing funding would occur. This list would also become the proposed ‘educational outcomes’ around which the higher education curriculum would eventually come to be administratively, if not pedagogically, framed. This will be taken up in section IV Representing the Graduate.

**Control strategy 3: Performance-based funding and inter-university competition**

Policy-driven performance–based funding was also introduced with Baldwin’s (1991) *Higher Education: Quality and Diversity in the 1990s* to make universities more accountable for their funding than they had ever been in the past. This involved the introduction of a Relative Funding Model that allocated funds, not on the historical basis of prestige, but on the basis of enrolments and performance according to the growing managerial logic accounting for value (Baldwin, 1991). Compliance with national priorities was determined through institutional and Government negotiations over the newly instituted and regularly reviewed institutional educational profiles and equity plans.

The newly introduced triennium funding for 1989-1991 (Dawkins DEET, 1988), 1990-92 (Dawkins DEET, 1990) and 1991-93 (Baldwin DEET, 1991) was used to facilitate the reform and expansion set in motion by the *Higher Education: A Policy Statement* (DEET, 1988). With each iteration more stringent arrangements were made to encourage more comprehensive detailed documentation and to link funding with compliance and performance. For example, in addition to the operating and capital funding grants for each institution, additional funding became closely attached to specific government agendas through the established National Priority (Reserve) Funding, the Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP), the Aboriginal Participation Initiative (API), the Aboriginal Education Strategic
Initiatives Program (AESIP), and grants under the Early Retirement/ Redundancy Fund (DEET, 1992). By the 1991-93 triennium, institutions were not just required to report on their success in compliance to these various policy agendas, but to also provide detail of the various strategies they were employing to meet the various targets that had been set, particularly in terms of student load and equity targets (DEET, 1991).

It was in this latter triennium that the notion of performance-based funding and competition between institutions was made explicit in the name of ‘the progressive establishment of an equitable funding base across the system’ (DEET, 1990b). The Higher Education Funding for the 1990-92 Triennium states explicitly that

Following the adjustment process arising from the application of the relative funding model, all institutions will be in a more equitable position to compete for resources both from within the system and from outside sources. The Government has signalled its intention to develop a funding system that responds to institutional performance taking into account a range of quantitative measures. (DEET, 1990b, p19) (my emphasis)

Universities were to compete for additional funding and be accountable for their use of it in quantifiable terms. From the late 1990s, universities were required to be publicly accountable to the Government, the community and consumers:

Governments must justify spending on higher education in competition with other demands for public spending. Communities whose taxes must support the system and individuals who need to be satisfied about the value and portability of their credentials all demand external validation of the quality of their investments. (DETYA, 2000, p2)

By the introduction of Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future (Nelson, 2003), performance-based funding was simply taken for granted. In the realm of teaching and learning, the introduction of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (DEST, 2004) explicitly linked additional funding for universities to educational reform and promoted institutional differentiation for the purposes of consumer choice:

The package of reforms includes $2.6 billion over the next five years in additional funding to the higher education sector linked to progressively introduced reforms. These reforms will establish a transparent and consistent policy framework in which universities are able to pursue their own strategic mission, capitalise on their strengths and further engage with their communities. Students will have increased opportunities
and greater choice through more equitable financing arrangements and a renewed emphasis on teaching and learning outcomes. (DEST, 2004, p5)

In this era of performance-based funding, teaching and learning performance would be tightly administered through an established regulatory and financial system of reward.

**Control strategy 4: Corporate governance and strategic management**

To achieve the outcomes mentioned above, more corporate notions of governance were increasingly normalised in universities (see Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Considine, 2001; Humes, 2000; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Meek, 2002; Sachs, 1999), and the language of marketing and managerialism came to colonise their operations. This marked a massive transformation in the way universities would operate. University governance was driven by notions of ‘strategic management’ as outlined in the Hoare Committee’s (1996) *Review of Management of Higher Education Institutions* (Anderson, Johnson, & Milligan, 1999). Mechanisms for change and managing change, after all, required university executives to play the game of strategic business planning. From the late 1990s, achieving quality was demonstrated through strategic planning documents, the articulation of missions, goals, strategies, and the strategic alignment of unit and faculty business plans to the university’s stated agendas.

Much has been written on the introduction of managerialism into the culture of the university. Considine (2001) captures the mood nicely in his refrain:

> It is difficult to be precise about the exact starting point for the recent transformations. But somewhere around the early 1990s the mood changed and the earth moved, university management became a conscious act of self-invention. You must have noticed this yourself. Administrators started tugging nervously at their bottom lines, pushing the envelope, thinking outside the square, getting all their ducks in a row, and giving plaintiff homilies about the gnostic importance of transparency and the solemn virtue of contestability. Mission statements started appearing on walls and advertisements for Discovery Day could be heard on rock stations. (no page)

The significant shift in organisational culture based on business models by the late 1990s was identified in Marginson’s (1999b) extensive research on governance and management in Australian higher education. His research suggested that rather than being something necessarily imposed from above, Australian universities had been ‘complicit in and active
agents of their own transformation’ (no page). His main findings included a shift in the operation of universities towards executive control: where managers functioned as ‘leaders’ engineering and implementing strategic plans; where decision making was controlled ‘not by legislative-style meetings but by plans, targets and formulae subject to executive technique’; and where the reform of governing councils and academic boards rendered them ‘less representative’ of internal constituents. This reform sought to produce an unprecedented level of freedom in engineering change. While Coald rake and Stedman (1999) are correct in urging us to critique these changes beyond a mangerialism/collegiality binary, it is indisputable that they accompanied if not facilitated a profound transformation in university governance. In fact, Edwards (2000) would suggest that managerialism operates through a contrived form of collegiality: the development of collaborative partnerships and the imperative to participate.

Control strategy 5: External accreditation and evaluation

By 2000, although the previously stated control strategies of self-regulation, performance-based funding, inter-university competition and changes to corporate governance could be seen to assure the internal quality mechanisms within the university, their combined rigor became problematised as being ‘inadequate’ to the task of ensuring the highest quality of teaching and research in a globally competitive environment (Harman & Meek, 2000, pv). The deregulated sector, it seemed, presented so many risks that it would require a reregulated framework. At a national seminar in December 1999, entitled Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Australian Higher Education (Skilbeck & Connell, 2000)\textsuperscript{74}, the need for ‘a fresh approach’ in a new quality assurance environment was signalled.

The newly fashioned higher education sector was regarded as globalised, technologised, internationally recognised, off-shore, export-based, inhabited by private providers and in need of clear accreditation processes (Harman & Meek, 2000). By 2000, DETYA produced an Occasional Paper entitled The Australian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework (DETYA, 2000), which linked mass higher education with new course delivery modes and franchising arrangements with third parties where the ‘parent institution may exercise limited

\textsuperscript{74} Sponsored by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA); the OECD’s Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) programme; and the University of New England’s Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy (CHEMP).
control, virtual course delivery, as well as the delivery of courses through satellite campuses situated at a substantial distance from the institution’s main campus’ (p1). The perceived fragmentation of the system was regarded as posing ‘challenges for the efficacy of institutional quality controls’ (p1).

The sector was also seen to be at risk of losing its competitive edge to its international competitors who were developing their own ‘national systems of external audit’ (Skilbeck & Connell, 2000, p2). As per this logic, when key consumers of education, such as international students, were making informed consumer choices about where to study, this ‘hall-marking process of external validation [tipped] the balance in favour of enrolling in institutions from these other countries’ (Skilbeck & Connell, 2000, p2). Reasonably then, establishing ‘a comparable, national system of external validation’ was seen as only ‘fair... to Australian universities as a whole’ (Skilbeck & Connell, 2000, p2). Australia would require a quality assurance framework that could protect its international reputation, make it publicly accountable and inform student choice (Harman & Meek, 2000, pv). The fairness it sought was a ‘fair playing field’ – a fair chance for all universities to compete internationally.

In contrast to the ACTS that were presented in the previous chapter, this ACT shows a significant shift in perspective from the ‘equity between cohorts’ of the welfare society to the equity between ‘competing universities’ in a neoliberal one. Having come to rely so heavily on ‘export’ education, maintaining competitive advantage within an increasingly deregulated/regulated sector had become the guiding logic for educational reform. Accordingly, a rigorous quality assurance and accreditation system is represented as fundamental to Australia’s international competitiveness. In 2000, this rigorous quality assurance and accreditation system was achieved through the incorporation into the Australian quality assurance framework, the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes as the central guidelines for internal review and accreditation and the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) as the external auditing agency (DETYA, 2000).

The following excerpt taken from Quality of Australian Higher Education: Institutional Quality Assurance and Improvement Plans for the 2001–2003 Triennium (DETYA, 2001) captures the discursive logic that prevails in the reform of the higher education sector and its quality assurance system:
Australia’s national policy environment encourages universities to seek greater commercial opportunities and align themselves more closely with industry needs. Efforts by the higher education sector to attract business investment rely to a considerable extent on available evidence attesting to the quality of their service and the skill level of their graduates. Formal, transparent and credible systems of quality assurance will help guarantee a successful future for Australian universities in this environment. (DETYA, 2001, p1)

Accordingly, Australian universities are required to be commercially opportunistic, align themselves with industry and attract investment. Attracting investment relies on evidence of quality and value; evidence which is only valid if it emerges from a credible and transparent system of quality assurance. Governments and consumers of education need to be convinced about the value and portability of their credentials. External validation in this environment is deemed the only way.

And yet, writing from the UK, Harvey and Newton (2004) provide an excellent critique of external validation. They suggest that although ‘it is taken as axiomatic that higher education institutions must ensure that they properly discharge their responsibilities for quality and standards’ (p157), they question the cost-benefit of the external validation process. Institutions spend millions of dollars on the performative requirements of the quality agenda alone. For example, they cite the expense of £300 million to conduct the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) in 2000 university departments over a period of seven years. Further, they add that ‘the contrived dialogue of these external events is in stark contrast to the open and sharing dialogue increasingly found within institutions’ (p153). Their suggestion is to ‘set aside the performances and game-playing of external quality evaluation and replace it with some systematic research’ (p153). But as one Vice Chancellor announced at an institutional Teaching Awards celebration, ‘this is a game we have to play’.

iii. Making sense of quality as ‘the game we have to play’

In ACT-IV, the focus has been on way the university has come to operate as a full-service enterprise in a globalised knowledge economy where the performative requirements of assuring the ‘quality’ and ‘outcomes’ of higher education have produced a range of control strategies aimed at internal and external validation. It has also been shown how quality strategies appear in response to the perception of risk. In this context, governing is seen to
require the development of new techniques for the evaluation and management of risk. Tikly (2003) suggests that these can be read as technologies of performance and technologies of agency, where: technologies of performance, include such things as devolved responsibility, the setting of performance criteria and management techniques that regulate freedom and manage risk; and technologies of agency include such things as the expectation of participation, notions of consumer and community influence and voice that invite the subject to participate in their own freedom.

The way in which the technologies of performance and technologies of agency have come to fill the discursive space opened by the imperative of validation will be discussed in this section. It is shown how the emphasis on evidence-based performance measures pre-defined at a transnational policy level for the globalised knowledge economy have a delimiting effect on what is valued in higher education (technologies of performance) and a profound effect on the way students and staff are able to identify and value themselves in higher education (technologies of agency). The purpose of this section is twofold: it demonstrates how the tension between the performative demands of the regulatory environment and the operational realities of the university produce the ‘quality’ agenda as a game to be played; and it establishes the conditions of possibility for learning advisors to appear as players in this game through administrative (regulating the teaching academic/curriculum) and pedagogical (conducting the outsourced teaching) interventions for policing the Graduate.

**Quality learning as skill certification**

It has been argued that although the transformation of universities since the 1950s tends to be captured by the notion of a shift from elite to mass education, such a view disguises the intensification of the discursive and regulatory environment that characterises contemporary post-secondary education. Cowen (1996b, p245), for example, argues that this discursive and regulatory environment, rendered amenable through the logic and language of ‘quality control’ insists ‘on a certain kind of ‘product’ from universities and careful measures of their ‘productivity’’. Cowen’s concern is that as university systems are being geared up to ‘sharpen the implements’ which will permit competition with other peoples, ‘the definition of educational quality is being bureaucratised as skill certification and ‘training’ for a flexible
workforce’ (Cowen, 1996b, p167). The emphasis on skill, flexibility and performance are key aspects of quality which pertain to both the staff and the students of the university.

It would appear that despite other voices in the debate, the focus on producing highly skilled, internationally competitive professionals, means the positivist and behaviourist perspective on outcomes dominates. Marginson and Mollis (1999), for example, provide an excellent critique of the positivist attempts to reform university education according to evidence-based measures of student learning outcomes and skill competencies. Their article does an excellent job of outlining the insidious implications of the intensification of standards and measures that stem from an increasingly deregulated, comparative and competitive world market governed by ‘supranational organisations and the interests of capital’ (Currie, 1996, p2). Strangely, we are compelled to align our institutions, ourselves and our students in terms of the performative targets and measures that count as quality. Along this vein, making sense of quality is achieved largely through the logic, language and technologies of performativity.

**Quality as performativity**

Performativity is a term introduced by Lyotard (1984) and taken up in the work of Olssen and Peters (2005), Ball (2000, 2003), Cowen (1996b) and Land (2006) among others to critique the way in which the discourses of efficiency and effectiveness have located the optimisation of the university’s performance as its ultimate goal (Welch, 1998). Ball (2003) locates performativity alongside marketing and managerialism as three policy technologies used to align university process and purpose with ‘the methods, culture and ethical system of the private sector’ (p216). Ball (2000) describes performativity as,

> A technology, a culture and a mode of regulation….that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change. The performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion ...or ‘inspection’. (Ball, 2000, p1)

Performativity is a flow of techniques and calculable devices that render selected aspects of organisational and individual performance calculable, visible and manageable, heralding the rise and rise of the administrator in education (Land, 2006). The emphasis is on measureable outputs (Olssen & Peters, 2005), and as such the measurable skill is a valuable target. In the performative culture, universities organise themselves around missions, targets, inputs,
outputs, and the value-added, while individuals organise themselves in relation to targets and personal measures of effectiveness and commitment. Ball (2003) suggests ‘the new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self, with a passion for excellence’ (p215), whose value can only be discerned in terms of the various performance criteria provided through the administrator.

For the contemporary academic, their value is constantly appraised through systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which aim to measure their commitment to the organisation’s goals. This is taken up in the work of Krejsler (2007) and Watson (2010). Krejsler (2007), for example, who identifies how educational professionals are required to ‘speak of their role and personality in accordance with the vision of their organization’ (p473) through the process of appraisal interviews, and probation and promotion processes. Ball has suggested that within this environment, practitioners are required to recognise and ‘organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations… to live an existence of calculation’ (p215), to interpellate their own values and desires in alignment with those of the organisation, to play the game of performativity. Ball (2000, 2003) and Cowen (1996a, 1996b) provide an insightful analysis of the way that the discourses of enterprise and excellence produce a regulatory environment for the individual practitioner that fosters a concern more with meeting the measures of ‘performance’ than the enhancement of ‘quality’. This, they suggest, is the effect of technologies of performativity that have dominated educational reform for the past two decades.

The irony is that the technologies of performativity sit in tension with the operational realities of the higher education environment, and therefore, rely heavily on game-playing and the fabrication of ‘excellence’ in learning and teaching. The problem of performativity is that in its aim to produce compliance it also produces ‘opacity rather than transparency as individuals and organizations take ever greater care in the construction and maintenance of fabrications’ (Ball, 2003, p215). One becomes more skilled at playing the quality game, not necessarily in an opportunistic way, but as a means of survival. With the promise of external evaluation, and with funding tied in various ways to performance, universities are compelled to play the game of quality through the development of ever more sophisticated strategies. Disturbingly, however, it is argued that the representation, the sign, rather than the reality that begins to count as valuable; that is, for example, the teaching award comes to stand in place of teaching.
excellence and survey data on the student experience comes to stand in place of quality learning.

Similar critiques grounded in studies of the higher education sector say much the same thing. Harvey and Knight (1996), for example, suggest that accountability-led approaches to quality management tend to produce a ‘culture of compliance’. Likewise, Astin’s (1999) research suggests that in the quality environment, academics are adept at learning to ‘play the game’. Newton’s (1999, 2000) study of the implementation of quality assurance processes over a five year period in one institution in the UK found that staff simply found ways of ‘feeding the beast’, dealing with the process ritualistically rather than focusing on real quality improvements. He also found a significant ‘implementation gap’ where respondents admitted to ‘paying lip service to the issues, but not making any real changes in practice’ (Newton, 2000: 155). The rationality of performativity, and the pursuit of resources and reputation (Astin 1999) had come to stand in place of any real qualitative changes in practice. In essence, quality had become a burden of layers of paperwork implemented through proformas providing the veneer of accountability (Dynan & Clifford, 2001).

Quality as excellence

The notion of ‘quality’ has various possible meanings. Harvey and Knight, for example, suggest five: fitness for purpose, value for money, perfection, transformation and excellence (1996). Originally, the notion of ‘fitness for purpose’ provided the main definition of quality as espoused by AUQA. This particular notion of quality is driven by the demands and needs of the consumer, as follows,

The University formulates its purposes to address what it sees as community needs. Educational and research programs are devised and implemented to meet these purposes and one aspect of their quality may be described as their ‘fitness for purpose’. In other words, the University must be clear about its purposes and have appropriate research, research training and teaching and learning plans to provide the points of reference by which the quality of its activities can be judged. (McTaggart, 2006, p64)
Despite this, today it would seem that the notion of quality as ‘excellence’ is experiencing a resurgence in Australian higher education.\(^\text{75}\) Harvey and Knight suggest that the quality as ‘excellence’ is based on notions of standards and benchmarking. The DEST (2004) *Teaching and Learning Performance Fund Issues Paper*, clearly identified these as key criteria in the audit of the quality of teaching and learning provision:

A focus for the first round of audits is the way in which institutions set and assess standards, including their moderation methods, formal benchmarking and less-structured institutional comparisons. (DEST, 2004, p10)

The concept of performativity provides a useful lens through which to view the notion of ‘excellence’ as an empty signifier waiting to be filled up with statistical calculations and stories of performance and quality (see also Land, 2006, Readings, 1996). According to Land (2006), as universities configure themselves in relation to the competitive globalised knowledge economy, ‘excellence emerges as a normative strategy’ (p102). For Readings (1996), it can be understood as a ‘a techno-bureaucratic notion…where excellence brackets the question of value in favour of measurement, replac[ing] questions of accountability or responsibility with accounting solutions’ (p120). From this perspective, the university as full service enterprise in a globalised knowledge economy can be described as what Readings (1996) refers to as a ‘post-historical’ institution, where education is no longer valued in terms of its cultural function, but is driven by the ‘techno-bureaucratic notion of excellence’ (Readings, 1996, p54).

Whether or not we agree with Readings’ full analysis of the historically changing idea of the university, he offers substantial insight into the ‘university of excellence’, ‘where excellence names a non-referential principle that allows the maximum of uninterrupted internal administration’ (p120). In this conception of the university, the value of higher education is measured with performance indicators and accounting solutions (p120) that have a greater concern for professionalisation as an end in itself. This aspect of Readings’ argument suggests that transnational capitalism has rendered the university into a form that has lost its need for ‘a grand narrative of culture in order to work’ (p168). This is supported by Considine’s (2001)

\(^\text{75}\) In 2009, the Australian Quality Assurance Agency (AUQA) was replaced by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).
analysis of the university as enterprise where he suggests that ‘culture itself is no more than the measured output of competitive effort’ (no page).

The notion of ‘quality’ in this sense becomes a rendition of something that has come to count as quality. Readings (1996) provides the example of pedagogical time or ‘time to completion’ that ‘is now presented as the universal criterion of quality and efficiency in education’ (p168). More recently, Gill (2004) has suggested that while the quality of Australian higher education is frequently touted in glossy brochures and international marketing campaigns, rather than those claims being made in terms of educational substance and research findings, they speak in terms of ‘throughputs and separations and timely completions... offering assurances of material success for future graduates’ (p8). The spin is there, but scholarship and substance could be lacking.

Readings’ (1996) insights would appear to have even greater salience today. Returning to the DEST (2004) Learning and Teaching Performance Fund Issues Paper, the language used to promote the status of teaching in universities relies heavily on the language of ‘excellence’:

The Government believes that rewards and incentives for excellence in learning and teaching will promote the overall quality of the sector, enabling excellence in learning and teaching to be placed alongside delivery of research excellence in terms of contribution to Australia’s knowledge systems. (DEST, 2004, p5) (my emphasis)

And yet, the document was unable to provide clear definition of excellence, as stated below:

There is, however, clearly no universally agreed and absolute definition of excellence in learning and teaching. Excellence may be assessed through a range of models and methodologies, based on performance indicators, peer review, the ‘value’ added to students by their learning experiences, or a combination of these… (DEST, 2004, p6)

What is a little disturbing is that the fund clearly states that despite its illusory nature, excellence is the only criteria against which performance will be judged: this means that demonstrating improvement will not be regarded as sufficient to qualify for this kind of funding,

It should be emphasised that the stated intention of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund is to reward excellence. This means that a performance improvement model is not appropriate. (DEST, 2004, p6)
According to this rationality, the *phantasmagoria* of excellence must be demonstrated through an evidence-based model for measuring the ‘value’ which has been added to the student experience, and it is here that the learning advisor finds a role to play.

**Excellence and the value-added**

In *ACT-I* and *ACT-II*, universities were shown to be developing increasingly sophisticated disciplinary techniques for the diagnosis and treatment of risk as it pertained to the effects of individual and social difference to student performance. In *ACT-III* and *ACT-IV*, these disciplinary techniques are layered over with control strategies, actuarial developments and various alignments concerned largely with optimising the performativity of the organisation, or at least its representation.

In the Australian higher education sector, ‘value-adding’ includes not only the demonstrable enhancement of the teaching and learning environment, but the outcomes of teaching and learning activities through measures such as academic progress, course satisfaction and graduate outcomes (DETYA, 2001). Demonstrating excellence – as enhancement and outcomes - through an evidence-based model relies heavily on the techniques of actuarialism and alignment.

**Actuarialism**

Actuarialism, in this thesis, refers to the reduction of all aspects of the education process to a series of calculable indicators and measures that have the power to determine what is valued, and which are employed as a means of regulation in the higher education sector (retention rates, progress rates, Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) data, for example). Rose (1999) suggests that in a control society the actuarial regime is used to regulate deviance through the management of risk. Whereas disciplinary technologies seek to alter the individual, the actuarial regime works on the physical and social structure in which those individuals behave. By identifying and monitoring risk factors, the actuarial regime attempts to take measures to ‘maximise the efficiency of the population as a whole’ (p236). Its form of intervention is risk management, assessing risk populations as aggregates, and structuring the possibility for problematic behaviour out of existence. It is, thus, regarded as a more effective form of power because it is insidious: it ‘instrumentalises
freedom’ (Rose, 1999, p237) through control mechanisms supplanted in the flows of everyday life making resistance more difficult.

**Alignment**

Alignment, in this thesis, refers to the performative measures that require a university to demonstrate greater policy and practice alignment at all levels of the university – alignment of university governance with business practices, alignment of university policy with national priorities, the alignment of university policy and faculty activities, the alignment of the university curriculum with industry requirements, the alignment of the graduate qualities with content and assessment, the constructive alignment of the curriculum to the stated learning outcomes, and the subjective alignment of the higher education professional to goals of the organisation, to name just a few. Alignment embodies the promise of empowerment and autonomy, non-alignment, of course, suggests deviance and waste. Alignment can be seen as an important performative measure against which ‘quality’ can be defined and assured.

The learning advisor will be shown to appear as a technology of reform in the alignment of the graduate qualities with content and assessment. It is in this space that the learning advisor can suggest they add value to the university, the curriculum and the student learning experience through the administrative regulation of pedagogy concerned with the alignment of graduate qualities with student outcomes. They also find themselves positioned as an outsourced pedagogical intervention for teaching aspects of the graduate qualities. This is taken up further in the following section.

**iv. Representing the Graduate**

Thus far in this ACT, I have sought to demonstrate how the conditions were created for the learning advisor to appear as a technology of reform in the quality assurance of the Graduate. The Graduate being discussed in this ACT is not the person *per se*, but the ‘output statement’ of a higher education degree (Nunan, 1999). It forms part of the quality contract that university has with its stakeholders, and it ties the ‘quality’ of the Graduate to the quality of the administrative and actuarial data that demonstrates it. It is in this space that the learning advisor can suggest they add value to the university, the curriculum and the student learning
experience through the administrative regulation of pedagogy concerned with the alignment of graduate qualities with student outcomes.

The graduate qualities can be defined as ‘…the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution’ (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts, 2000). These qualities might include attributes such as independent learning, effective communication, social responsibility and problem-solving. As mentioned in Section IV.I, ‘the Graduate’ as a list of qualities – values, skills and attitudes – became a feature of university strategic planning in 1992 with the publication of Higher Education: Achieving Quality (HEC, 1992). This was reinforced by the West Report (1998), which emphasised that ‘the quality of education must be measured in terms of what students know, understand and can do at the end of their education experience’. These statements, which have been a feature since the internal self-reviews of the 1990s, were strengthened with the external validation processes introduced in 2000 as the quality lens began to focus more intently on outcomes and tied them to funding.

As a means of product differentiation, a statement of educational outcomes, a required demonstration of ‘quality’, and the ultimate deliverable of a higher education, the graduate qualities function as a technology of performance leveraging the kind of pedagogical, professional and subjective reform in the academy that aims to minimise risk and maximise output. Nunan (1999) argued that there were two characteristics for measuring institutional commitment to the graduate qualities: the first was the extent to which curriculum design was directed towards achieving the set of qualities [the pedagogical]; and the second was the extent to which formal assessment and reporting are shaped by the qualities [the administrative]. What we may find, however, is that in playing the game of quality, the pedagogical tends to get displaced by the administrative game, and the administrative game is pre-occupied with the actuarial.

The Graduate as a set of stated qualities and as the necessary outcome of any degree program in the university requires the tuning of all aspects of teaching and learning to optimal production requirements and the minimisation of the risk of deviance from those specifications. In the performative university of excellence, what is required is an adequate representation of the Graduate as an outcome of quality assurance processes and external measures of outcomes - this represents an administrative and actuarial challenge to the
university. As discussed in IV.III, the graduate qualities/attributes provide a framework against which the ‘value-added’ can be measured, or at least rhetorically composed, through actuarial and administrative strategies. The actuarial measures include the kind of data acquired from internal databases, such as student satisfaction data, time to completion, rate of progress, and aggregated data collected externally, such as the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and other post-enrolment measures. Poor performance in these areas provides the impetus for improved administrative measures to the quality processes, curriculum documentation and performance management.

One of the key administrative measures that universities are able to attend to is the constructive alignment of the curriculum which has a direct link to the subjective alignment of the teaching academic and the student. ‘Constructive alignment’ was a term introduced to teaching and learning in the academy by Biggs (1999) as an outcomes-based methodology for promoting deep learning. On the surface, it is a deeply sensible practice: as a teacher, you identify your learning outcomes in terms of what students will be able to know or do; you design your teaching and learning activities and your assessment to teach and test these things; and you make those links explicit to the students. A quick search of the web will demonstrate how popular it is amongst Australian and UK universities in particular76.

What I wish to argue is that ‘constructive alignment’ is a timely concept given that it appears to embody the very principles of what we might imagine as a neoliberal pedagogy. I suggest there are four major principles that identify constructive alignment as a neoliberal pedagogy: the first is the way it locates pre-defined learning outcomes at the heart of its pedagogy; the second is its promise of risk minimisation and learning maximisation through a reflective design model; the third is the way it distributes responsibility from the university to the individual teacher and to the student; and fourth is the way it colonises the subjectivity of the teaching academic. These require further elaboration.

As was demonstrated earlier in ACT-IV, student learning outcomes had come to stand as one of the most important ‘tests’ of quality in higher education from around the year 2000. For example, at the OECDs Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) Conference on higher education entitled ‘Outcomes of Higher Education: Quality, Relevance and Impact’ (OECD, 2008), it was stated,

Special attention will be given to new approaches of evaluating and assessing higher education in terms of its outcomes, for example in learning or employment. These assessments are seen by many higher education institutions and national governments as important for improving accountability, employability and quality of teaching. The OECD is exploring possibilities for assessing higher education learning outcomes on an international comparative perspective. This would for the first time provide internationally comparative information about the performance of higher education systems. (OECD, 2008, no page)

As an outcomes-based methodology then, constructive alignment presents itself as a solution to the imperative to assure and demonstrate quality learning outcomes. This, despite the fact that narrowly specifying learning outcomes and moving towards a ‘capability-driven curriculum’ (Bowden, et al, 2000) has been widely opposed in higher education.

The promise of risk minimisation and learning maximisation is particularly appealing. Alignment of all ‘the components of the teaching system’ (Biggs, 2003) act as strict boundaries around what will be learnt. The student is ‘in a sense trapped, and finds it difficult to escape without learning what he or she is intended to learn’ (Biggs, 2003). The methodology seeks to ‘set up an environment that maximises the likelihood that students will engage in the activities designed to achieve the intended outcomes’ (Biggs, 2003). The method, thus, designs out surface approaches to learning and designs in student engagement by integrating all aspects of the deep learning pedagogical model; thereby optimising the efficiency of the learning environment with the minimum of risk, effort and waste.

The most important thing about constructive alignment is that it focuses on what the teacher does rather than who the student is or what he or she knows and can do already. This raises the issue of responsibility. Because constructive alignment takes as its central principle that ‘the students construct meaning through relevant learning activities’ (Biggs, 2003), the responsibility of the teacher ends with compliance to the design principles, and the student is ultimately responsible for his/her learning. This suggests one can design around the
complicating factors of student difference, and step back when students find themselves in trouble. But as Bock (1986) made clear in her critique of the phenomenographic approach, design is not a panacea: the students who came to see her as a ‘study skills advisor’ were often enrolled in the most carefully designed subjects.

What is most pervasive about constructive alignment, however, is the way the Graduate appears as the representation of what the teacher does. It seeks to colonise the subjectivity of the teaching academic as it operates as a technology of performance for measuring commitment, efficacy and relevance. In this sense, it operates insidiously as a process of subjective alignment. Because constructive alignment depends almost entirely on what the teacher does, the quality of the learning environment can be read off the commitment, expertise and reflexivity of the teacher, or at the very least, its representation. Non-alignment suggests deviance and waste: alignment suggests empowerment, autonomy and reward. Freedom is instrumentalised through constructive alignment as the most pervasive form of power.

This section has presented a case for how we might recognise the Graduate not just as a set of educational outcomes stated in the quality documents of the university, but as an important technology of performance to govern the discipline academic as well as the students.

v. Quality assuring the Graduate

In the previous section, I discussed how the Graduate appears as a set of educational outcomes that can be, to some degree, quality assured through constructive alignment in the design of the curriculum and correspondingly, the subjective alignment of the discipline academic. In this section, I demonstrate how learning advising appears out of this logic as the coalface of their practices shifts further from the individual student and extends to the mapping of curriculum, pedagogical design and outsourced teaching of credit-and non-credit bearing programs in the quality assurance of the Graduate. In this ACT, the learning advisor appears not as a redemptive agent for the student at risk, but as the agent of change for the organisation at risk. It demonstrates how the neoliberal principles of regulating autonomy in the population set learning advisors to work on staff as well as students in the academy.
While policing the Graduate can entail a wide range of practice, I am most concerned with those I have framed on a loose continuum from administrative (policy development and implementation) to pedagogical (design and teaching). I do not suggest these two sets of practices are mutually exclusive, or exclusive by any means. The administrative practices for the learning advisor include such things as contributing to policy development, sitting on educational committees, and signing off on subject proposal forms. Somewhere between administrative and pedagogical practices are those key practices of constructive alignment and curriculum mapping. Interestingly, these practices bring the learning advisors’ role into close alignment with the work of educational developers, whose focus has been on the teaching academic and the curriculum since their separation from learning advising, as described in ACT-II. Setting learning advisors apart, however, is the expectation that we maintain our role as pedagogues, teachers of students, as we become increasingly involved the design and teaching of specific courses and programs aimed at fostering the Graduate Qualities; that is, despite our efforts to embed this kind of teaching into the subject curriculum, too often it is reframed as ‘skills’ teaching that is outsourced to the learning advisor.

Like educational developers, one of the key practices for policing the graduate that brings together the administrative and pedagogical function of the learning advisor is involvement in the constructive alignment of the individual subject and the curriculum mapping of whole of course activities. Curriculum mapping has been a feature of education in Australia at least since 1988 with the publication of the Australian Education Council’s ‘Mapping the Australian Curriculum’ (AEC, 1988). For universities, curriculum mapping entered the vocabulary with the generic skills/ graduate qualities movement and the increasing requirements for their validation. In the past decade, curriculum mapping has been an important feature of the quality assurance of the graduate qualities in higher education. Bowden, et al. (2000), for example, in their work on the graduate capabilities of ATN students urged for the development of a capability-driven curriculum, providing a framework for action which included a comprehensive review and redevelopment of the curriculum.

Today there is a wide field of literature related to the mapping and embedding of graduate capabilities in the curriculum (see for example, Barrie, 2007; Bath, Smith, Stein, & Swann, 2004; Oliver, Jones, Ferns, & Tucker, 2007; Sumision & Goodfellow, 2004). The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) Good Practice Database includes cases of mapping and embedding the graduate qualities from the University of Queensland (Keniger, 2004), the
University of New England (Stein, 2004), and Murdoch University (Lowe, 2007). In 2007, the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) provided almost $200,000 to Carew et al. for a cross-institutional project entitled ‘The integration and assessment of Graduate Attributes in the Curriculum’ (Carew, et al., 2009). In 2010, the ALTC Fellow, Professor Bev Oliver, created the link between curriculum mapping and benchmarking in the quality assurance of the graduate capabilities and employability, by working on a project that combines specification of the attributes, curriculum mapping, eportfolios, work experience, indicators and benchmarking in what she refers to as a 360 degree approach to capability development for graduate employability (Oliver, 2010). On the one hand, the closing circle of the 360 degree approach illustrates a sound strategy in the world of quality assurance. On the other, it represents yet another example of what Blackmore (2010) has critiqued as ever ‘tighter circles of performativity’ (p101) subjecting ‘the core practices of educators …to greater control’ (p101).

The inherent logic of curriculum mapping, it seems, is to be taken for granted. Even the critique of curriculum mapping appears to take it as axiomatic that it can and should be done. The question then is only how best to do it and what one should do with the information afterwards. For example, providing a critique of curriculum mapping as an educational process embedded within power relations, Smith and Whelan (2005) report on a project where their initial discomfort as ‘change agents’ was overcome by the positive aspects of participating in ‘critical conversations’ with discipline staff as they ‘articulated discipline-specific graduate outcomes … and foundational-level outcomes for the core units’ (p528). Through this process they were able to identify ‘areas of overlap and gaps’ [read inefficiency and wastage], and design ‘a number of templates…to support the dialogues about curriculum regeneration’ (p528). Whether experienced as positive or negative, curriculum regeneration, critical conversations, dialogue and participation are all subsumed within the change practices of constructive and subjective alignment.

As mentioned in the previous section, the ‘Graduate’ as an outcome of the alignment of the curriculum is largely dependent on the constructive alignment of teaching and learning processes and the subjective alignment of the teaching academic. I use subjective alignment here to refer to the interpellation of an individual’s desires with organisational goals. The professionalisation of university since the problematisation of student failure in the 1950s has involved the development of increasingly sophisticated ways to regulate and monitor the
professional expertise and commitment of the teaching academic; for example, the reflective devices of student and subject surveys and peer review have been combined with the teaching ‘awards’ and ‘citations’ for good practice. All these encourage the teaching academic to recognise and value him/herself according to his/her ability to represent him/herself as meeting the criteria of either competence or excellence.

One example of how this can be seen to come together in the learning advisor’s practice is provided by George and O’Regan (1998) in their paper ‘A professional development model of student support’. In this paper, the learning advisors report on ‘a strategic intervention in curriculum development… involving academic support staff engaged in both professional development and student support activities working collaboratively with discipline based teachers to integrate learning support within the teaching of a subject’. This professional development model for the provision of student support entailed a number of elements that we have seen in the principles of constructive and subjective alignment: for example, the paper reported that at the macro-level of the subject, the major initiative involved the preparation of appropriate course documentation demonstrating alignment in the design between the objectives, teaching and assessment activities,

...three critical elements of educational design are drawn together. The objectives of the subject (including the requirement of the graduate qualities) are clarified; the nature and timing of the assessment is then determined; and the teaching and learning arrangements which support students in this assessment are decided. The linking of these three components in a pedagogically justifiable way is the key construct in this approach. For example, if particular communication skills are an objective of the subject, this must then appear in some significant way in the assessment, and the teaching and learning arrangements must not only allow students to use these communication skills but must systematically teach them to do so. This macro level of development is required for course documentation within the University. (George & O’Regan, 1998, no page)

According to the authors, ‘the mapping process is a crucial aspect of the development because it provides a way of monitoring the relationship between the intention (the objectives) of the subject-lecturer and the corresponding experience of the students (the opportunities that are actually structured into the subject’)’ (no page). Although the focus is on the curriculum and the pedagogical aspects of the subject, this ‘professional development’ model aims to change what the discipline lecturer can do and what s/he values as a teacher in higher education.
For the ‘learning advisor as change agent’, the most prized transformation is that of the skills, values and attitudes, not of the graduate, but of the teaching academic. In ‘From integration to transformation’ (James, Skillen, Percy, Tootell & Irvine, 2004), it is stated:

Integration can achieve transformation: transformation of people’s knowledges and skills, of their practices and their values: the ‘people’ here are of course both discipline academics and learning developers. Collaborating in integration can allow us to act as “transformers” of curricula (Webb, 2002, p.15) or “change agents” (Skillen & Mahony, 1996) for institutional practice. In fact, working in this way may lead us towards what Webb (2002, p.18) hoped learning developers might be known as: "catalysts for systemic change, facilitators of organisational learning, [and]…partners in the transformation of university teaching and learning". (James, et al., 2004, p2)

What is at stake in this is the autonomy of the discipline academic and the learning advisor as ‘freedom’ is increasingly regulated through technologies of performance. This is not freedom as an escape from oppression or repression, but freedom as an engagement in a productive site of identity formation that is increasingly regulated in ways which narrow the very possibilities of being.

Although ‘transformation’ of the curriculum and the discipline academic might be the ultimate goal of some learning advisors, more often, learning advisors are positioned less as agents of change and more as agents of redemption to pedagogically police the Graduate through outsourced teaching. Returning to the various critiques of ‘curriculum-mapping’, Barrie’s (2007) concern with ‘curriculum audits or mapping exercises’ is that rather than resulting in improved learning design, they are more likely to result in the identification of ‘remedial initiatives, such as university bridging courses in academic English skills, or ‘associated’ approach initiatives, such as additional courses in library skills and essay writing offered by the university library or student learning support centre, as evidence that generic attributes are being addressed’ (p439). The quality assurance of the Graduate is outsourced to the librarian or the learning advisor. I take up this point in considering how learning advisors are positioned as a pedagogical intervention in the quality assurance of the graduate.

From within the field, these same concerns have been voiced. Chanock (2003b), for example, in her paper outlining the challenges of implementing the graduate attributes agenda in an Arts Faculty, provides a neat summation of how learning advisors get positioned as universities respond to the pressure to be accountable and work ‘to integrate the development
of desirable Graduate Attributes (GAs) into their curricula’. She suggests that while learning advisors are ‘…perceived to teach generic skills’, we will increasingly be called upon to ‘play a role in designating attributes and/or facilitating the integration of these into the subject curricula….assist[ing] with the professional development of staff in the disciplines to adapt their teaching…[or] asked to teach generic units focusing on developing graduate attributes’ (p1).

Increasingly, learning advisors are called upon to independently or collaboratively develop discipline-based foundational subjects particularly those targeting English language, academic literacy and academic integrity development at the undergraduate and postgraduate level (Shaw, Moore, & Gandhidasan, 2007; Velautham & Picard, 2009). In 2007, the AALL Benchmarking project77 demonstrated that of the 59 units that participated in the project, 86% engaged in ‘Subject/course integration (curriculum development, learning resources, guest lectures, co-teaching)’; 64% in ‘Committee representation and policy development (at both university and faculty level)’; and 52% in offering ‘Courses (Credit and non-credit)’. This was in addition to the other various practices in which these units engaged that we have seen build up over the previous acts (for example, individual consultations, workshops, resource development).

Other practices include whole of program collaborative groups: one example involves the establishment of The First Year Biology Learning and Teaching Group at La Trobe University (Yucel, et al., 2009) that consisted of discipline staff, library staff and learning advisors, and was formed in response to the actuarial problem of poor student feedback. The aim of convening the group was to streamline the teaching of generic and laboratory skills by working collaboratively on a whole-of-program-approach’ (p26) by implementing a process-focused skills-based pedagogy’ (p28). Increasingly, learning advisors design and teach inside disciplines to quality assure the graduate.

77 59 of the total 75 Australian ALL units participated in this project.
vi. Correspondence to the present

‘...good ALL practices add value to the university and increase its reputation…’
AALL President (Barthel 2007)

Returning to the perspectives of learning advisors in the present, what becomes apparent is the way that the marketing of the university as a quality-controlled service enterprise has a push-pull effect on the learning advisor. On the one hand, we may get positioned, or attempt to position ourselves, as agents of change, where we feel that we add-value to the student experience and improve the university’s reputation by attempting to enhance higher education pedagogy and inspire teaching staff to research their teaching. On the other, we find ourselves constantly recuperated into the redemptive aspects of the academy, conducting a range of outsourced ‘skills’ teaching; used in marketing campaigns to guarantee personalised learning support; and acting as the redemptive agent for remedial cases. For those of us who do work with faculty, we are constantly negotiating the tension between game-playing, box-ticking and getting things done. Caught up in an evidence-based universe, we are also increasingly expected to provide evidence of the success of our work.

Interestingly, our ‘mediation role’, earlier identified in ACT-I between the student and the academic, in ACT-II between the student and the conventions of the discipline, and in ACT-III between the academic and the curriculum, takes another dimension in ACT-IV, mediating the distance between the student learning experience and the university’s reputation. The learning advisor as an administrative and pedagogical intervention attempts to add value to the student learning experience and improve the university’s reputation by attempting to enhance higher education pedagogy and inspire teaching staff to research their teaching.

In the University as Enterprise, the learning advisor is wise to position him/herself as an intrinsic part of the quality/excellence agenda. One learning advisor described how he saw ‘quality’ functioning in the education market and how the learning advisor could be seen as playing a key role,

…people still want a high quality higher education experience… people are now willing to pay for the quality of their education…And what we’re seeing at the moment is a shake out in universities as to who will offer what quality of education. You measure it by the fees that universities will charge. The Group of Eight can still charge higher fees
than say the University of New England or the University of Tasmania. Another measurement is in the university entrance score, 95, 98 for Law or what have you, it’s almost a quasi-market system that’s operating in fees and UAI. But it’s in that area that academic skills can bring in the quality argument. If we can enhance the quality of the student experience and the quality of the student output, we can value add, this is where we stand in between the student and the academic. We can value add in that middle there. (16)

This point is reinforced by another learning advisor who suggested that ‘if you’re looking for quality or excellence in learning students need to know how to learn and how to achieve better’ (14). The learning advisor is capable of using this principle to maximum advantage.

In the University of Enterprise, the desire for alignment comes from multiple sources. The first is the way the learning advisor and his/her unit are required to align themselves with the university’s objectives in order to ‘maintain [the university’s] reputation and to create a good learning environment for students’ (13). Another is the desire to align the disciplines with the work of the learning advisor; for example, one learning advisor, who is located inside a faculty and yet feels she is on the periphery, said

…what I would like to achieve is to be much more closely aligned with the disciplines and be invited to participate in discussions about curriculum changes, about how to present materials, to be an integral part. (2)

Another example comes from the work we do inside the disciplines to align the learning outcomes of the curriculum to the teaching and assessment practices. The most illustrative example of this comes from an interview with one learning advisor who worked with discipline staff on curriculum mapping and the development of learning guides. She was involved in ‘mapping the whole course, trying to ensure they had scaffolded across’ (11). This was a course where students ‘come into second year…with eighteen months to go and progress into a Bachelor degree’ (11). Like others’ experiences in this kind of work, this learning advisor had already been working on several incarnations of the degree over six years. She felt that her role was simply to keep ‘that learning aspect on the agenda as they go through all of these changes’ (11). She also suggested that this had ‘a lot to do with personalities’ (11). Some lecturers, she had never met and appeared quite ‘resistant’. All these issues will sound familiar to those learning advisors engaged in this kind of practice.
Harking back to the tension between person-centred and curriculum-centred practices that were identified in *ACT-III*, this learning advisor’s unit discontinued the work with students so they could focus on working with discipline staff on the development of learning guides, which were introduced in policy as a way of attending to poor student feedback. The learning guide is a ‘compliance document’ (11) and ‘an explicit but living document’ (11) that had been brought in for ‘all first year and fourth year Honours subjects’ specifically to make ‘the link between the learning outcomes and the assessment task’ … to bring ‘all those underlying assumptions that lectures have are brought to the fore’ (11). Importantly, this practice was sanctioned because the university ‘falls a bit low in the student feedback’, and it is designed according to the assumption that ‘students are driven by is assessment’,

So the assessment is clear, has a rationale and a purpose and a clear link, is explained clearly and supported well. So part of the learning guide is Teaching and Learning activities, so academic literacy comes into a lot of that – or numeracy, depending on the subject. (11)

This particular practice contains a combination of the various actuarial, alignment, administrative and pedagogical agendas that were raised in this ACT. For example, the practice emerged out of the actuarial concern of poor student feedback; the practice itself aims to make explicit to the consumer of education the alignment between the learning outcomes and assessment; the practice is administrative in that it involves the development of a teaching document that can stand in place of teaching quality; and it is pedagogical in that involves collaboration with the discipline academic to identify his/her ‘underlying assumptions’ and develop resources as models and advice for students.

Outside of this policy-sanctioned practice, this learning advisor still draws attention to the difficulty of ‘change agency’ from the ‘bottom-up’, an issue that was first raised in *ACT-II*. While the ‘change agent’ seeks to develop relationships and facilitate change in the disciplines, in reality it is rarely ‘strategic’. For the most part, although we set out to target core subjects and facilitate change, we usually end up ‘working with people in silos in the school, or with people who are committed anyway’ (11).

A further example of how practices are reduced to an administrative intervention for quality assuring the Graduate is illustrated by one learning advisor who commented on her
The university’s approach to the graduate qualities and her criticism of the link made between policy and practice,

The [university’s] philosophy is that you write things into policy and then it happens, so they cooked up this thing that, because of the graduate qualities that we have, that different courses across the program would say where they are developing these things and state them explicitly in little boxes… then someone cooked up the idea that, well if the course is worth 4.5 units, then you need to show where the 4.5 units are as well. And this was going to be a way of staff engaging with it …and instead of a policy process, it just became a ‘tick, tick, tick’, and that is why I don’t think we are as strategic as even we would like to think we are, even in the courses that we run sessions in. (6)

In these cases, learning advisors are called upon to vet subject proposals or outlines and provide feedback on paperwork to quality assure the Graduate.

On the other hand, it is possible to regard the learning advisor as a pedagogical intervention for the Graduate when the learning advisor has a remit to provide professional communication courses for credit within existing degree programs. One example comes from a learning advisor who designs and teaches courses for credit, but whose ultimate goal is for the faculty to assume some level of responsibility and ownership over it. This latter point is evidence of the desire of the learning advisor to achieve a cultural change in the faculty and a subjective change in the teaching academic,

…we do offer, and this is what we are trying to do more of, a credit bearing academic literacy course in each of the faculties. So for quite some time we have been doing [subject name] as a compulsory subject. The other which is more recent is the compulsory communication subject for [discipline] professionals, and that is different in that it’s been written and coordinated by [the learning advisors] and was taught exclusively by [the learning advisors] last year. This year they’ve tried to get [discipline] staff involved, and that’s kind of… well …it is difficult to get the [discipline] people involved, and in some way, you know having the faculty take some kind of responsibility. I think the move now is to get the faculty to have more ownership of it. (9)

A complication for the learning advisor in the University as Enterprise is the tension between functioning as an academic and operating in a service unit. Although more recently, the emphasis has been on the academic nature of the work we do, the agent of redemption is
recuperated by the imperative of service provision, which has been heightened by the consumer perspective on higher education. Part of the reason for this is the way learning advising units are positioned in the university, for example, one learning advisor said,

…even though we talk increasingly about integrating the work we do across the curriculum, we are still separate centres, we are still centres that operate outside of faculties. If you are working in the faculty, you think it is the people outside the faculty who fix the problems – ‘we’ll send them to the centre’ - and I am not just talking about the physical location, I am talking about the concept… (18)

Even for units that have a long history of curriculum-integrated work, ‘we are always fighting that perception of the [learning advisor] as the fixer… it’s a constant tension’ (6).

For the more cynical among us, we might suggest that learning advising functions as a marketing tool to ‘prop up the university’s appearance to support marketing and sell out the best statistics’ (2), particularly now that ‘universities need to appear to be accepting the diversity of the student population’ (2). Too often, ‘the marketing is, if you have any problems, come to the [learning advisors]’ (6). With the unwanted recommendation comes the inappropriate measurement of the difference we are seen to make to the university. For example, an emphasis on measuring learning advising ‘in terms of the services and the quality of the services’ we provide leads to the use of evaluation sheets that ask students: What do you expect when you come in? Do you expect to see someone in 5 minute? Do you expect this and that? And they call that an evaluation our work’ (6).

Indeed, with the emphasis on actuarialism and learning outcomes as identified in the preceding sections of this ACT, there is significant recognition that the difficulty in obtaining measurable outcomes is a core problem for the legitimacy of the field of learning advising in the present. While historically the university may have taken for granted the value of our work, as ‘therapeutic’, as ‘educational’, as ‘ethical’, in the same way it took for granted the substance of our practices, today, we operate in a far more competitive space and are compelled to provide evidence of the difference we make to the university, the student and the academic (16). This is clear in comments where we suggest that while ‘at the coalface, we have a very important role’ (2), because of the relational, complex and qualitative nature of the work we do, it is not readily measured in quantifiable terms: ‘I’m not sure we demonstrate
it, but I am not sure how to either’ (2). For this reason, we see ourselves as living in uncertain times (16).

Attempting to achieve other indicators of success one learning advisor suggested that our work is not just about making a difference to students, but making a difference in terms of the strategies we develop for capturing and sharing those practices; that is, in capturing and sharing the transformation that learning advisors can make to teaching and learning across the university (12). This conundrum invokes a necessary reflexivity. It turns the quality gaze very intently on our own practices. The quality of curriculum-integrated activities, for example, cannot be taken for granted (12), as one learning advisor pointed out,

… by definition there’s plenty of curriculum-integrated stuff that is probably a waste of time. It’s not per se. It’s about quality, whatever the practice is; whether it’s an individual consultation or whether it’s a resource, learning design or teaching face-to-face. I’m interested in the quality and how you achieve quality. How do you know that this is a worthwhile activity in the first place? How do you document what difference it’s making to anybody and how do you make it shareable? (12)

For this learning advisor, evidence of effectiveness and shareability are two criteria by which the quality of curriculum-integrated practices should be judged,

Well it’s not that it’s doing it curriculum-integrated or doing it extracurricular per se. It’s doing it well and knowing that it’s worth doing, knowing that you’re doing it well and, if you’re not doing it well, knowing how you can improve. I’m more interested in that as a practice. That sort of reflective, evaluative cycle of improvement is what interests me: how to achieve that, rather than just mindlessly - oh we just have to do this because we just have to do this. (12)

In summary, the exigencies of the University as Enterprise invite learning advisors to quality assure the Graduate and make a difference to the student experience through their influence on the curriculum and pedagogy of the university. Ironically, they are continually called on to behave as the agent of redemption. What is clear is that across history there has been a layering of strategies to make a difference to student learning that has led the learning advisor further from the individual student as the subject of practice. While we might regard these as being identical in intention, I have argued that we might also see them as ruptures that have a history, a context and a residue that complicates the learning advisor’s work in the present.
ACT-IV Summary

In summary, *ACT-IV* demonstrates how the learning advisor emerges as an administrative and pedagogical intervention as the ‘Graduate’ functions as a set of prescribed educational outcomes driving teaching and learning reform in the university. The practices that become visible include collaboration with course teams on curriculum mapping projects, collaboration with discipline academics on the alignment and scaffolding of assessment tasks with learning outcomes, signing off on subject proposal forms, and the development of learning guides for subjects. It also includes more responsibility for teaching whole courses concerned with ‘skills’ or with the skills components of courses.

Chapter Five summary: the agent of change, disciplining freedom, regulating autonomy

Chapter Five demonstrates how the moral agency of the learning advisor as ‘agent of change’ emerged out of the broader political reasoning of neoliberalism that is concerned with the discipline of freedom and the regulation of autonomy as the primary goal of government. The two ACTS in this chapter trace the surface of this political rationality identifying a rupture in the discursive framing of the purpose and value of higher education from ‘economic stabiliser’ in *ACT-III* to ‘full service enterprise’ in *ACT-IV*. Whereas Chapter Four identified the learning advisor as ‘general insurance against student failure’ according to the logic of an interventionist social government, Chapter Five identifies the learning advisor as ‘general insurance against organisational failure’ according to the logic of risk and regulation in a globalised and highly competitive world market.

Importantly, *ACT-I* and *IV* demonstrate a shifting coalface for learning advising work as different problematisations of the subject of higher education serve as displacements that form layers of intelligible practices. It has been shown how, since the early emergence of learning advising in the 1950s, the shifting coalface has been an effect of the waves of discursive and regulatory reform that have invited learning advisors to reconfigure their ethical agency from ‘redemption’ - disciplining individual and social difference, to ‘change’ - regulating autonomy in the learner and academic professional. The story that these four ACTs tell, however, is not one of transformation, but one of complexification as the learning advisor as
‘agent of change’ comes to exist beside and in tension with the ‘agent of redemption’. With each new problematisation comes the opportunity for other kinds of work, and an insistence on more of the same.
CHAPTER SIX: LEARNING ADVISING - A MODERNIST PROJECT IN RUINS

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has used the lens of governmentality, genealogical design and archaeological method to examine various policy constructions of learning advising work to provide one partial analysis of the way learning advisors have been invited to make sense of themselves in Australian higher education. Emerging out of the findings of this study is the understanding that learning advising can be recognised as a modernist project in ruins: a contested discursive space in the academy filled with ‘overlappings, interactions and echoes’ (Foucault, 1990) of competing histories, truths, and deployments. Characterised by difference, the commonality among its practitioners is their political positioning within the academy, their shared will to make sense of their work, and the endless search for ‘meaningful’ ways to make a difference to student learning. In particular, the discursive complexity and ontological stammering of the learning advisor, as demonstrated at the beginning of this thesis in ‘The learning advising complex’ (Section 1.3) and ‘A counter-narrative’ (Section 2.4), are shown to be the cumulative effect of historical constellations, conflicting rationalities and multiple truths that layer and confuse how we are able to think and talk about the ‘problem’ of student learning in the academy.

Using the lens of governmentality, the previous chapters demonstrate how the emergence and complexification of the learning advisor can be understood as an effect of the intensification of social discipline in a liberal society where, historically, it has been shown that normalising strategies concerned with disciplining difference in individuals and social groups are layered over with control strategies for regulating autonomy and responsibility in the population through technologies of performance. This has demonstrated how what counts as learning advising is rendered intelligible by the problematisation of the subject of higher education as the object of government. Specifically, this analysis has identified contingency and difference at the heart of learning advising in order to trouble the drive to consensus and unity bound up in the normalising discourses that are likely to prevail in the professional will to truth.
In this chapter, my aim is to synthesise for my self and my profession what this means in terms of political and ethical agency; that is, to contemplate, as Foucault (1980b) suggests ‘…if this is the relationship that we have with truth, how must we behave?’ (p330)

6.2 Learning advising as a modernist project in ruins

As already stated, this study demonstrates how learning advising can be understood as a modernist project in ‘ruins’ in the sense that it lacks a clear or stable referent in terms of its function or value. I use the metaphor of ‘ruins’ from Readings (1996, 1997), which has been further taken up in the feminist post-structural work of St Pierre (1997a), St Pierre and Pillow (2000) and Lather (2003), and applied in the educational context, for example, by Britzman (2000), Cary (2004) and Lambert (2009). Like Readings’ (1996) ‘university in ruins’, I suggest that learning advising is ‘the sedimentation of historical differences’ (Readings 1997). It is not a science or a model, but ‘a floating signifier of multiple meanings and nuanced contradictions’ (Cary, 2004, p320) that haunt the learning advisor and demand to be negotiated in the present. For example, the agent of change is haunted by the expectation that s/he will behave like the agent of redemption; the socio-cultural diagnosis of difference is haunted by the diagnosis of psycho-social factors; and the move to ‘regulate autonomy’ is haunted by the problem of difference. As Readings (1996, p171) suggests, ‘the past is not erased but haunts the present’. The past may have lost its original form and context, but its truths are folded into the forms and contexts of the present. Coming full circle to where this thesis began, I draw on St Pierre’s (1997) work to describe the learning advisor as a post-structural subject,

Unstable, contingent, experimental subjects; subjects without a centered essence that remains the same throughout time; subjects produced within conflicting discourses and cultural practices; subjects who can no longer rely on rationality to produce true knowledge; subjects at the mercy of language; subjects who, as a result, are freer than they think -- such subjects can take nothing for granted. (p410)

Coming to terms with the learning advisor as a post-structural subject whose political and ethical agency is globally and institutionally contingent requires a way of living on in the ruins of ‘agency’ as it had been previously imagined.
From melancholy to mourning

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, the need to learn how to make the shift from melancholy to mourning - to reengage with life in learning advising after the promise of ‘change agency’ - was one of the motivating forces for this thesis. In doing the work of this thesis, it has become increasingly clear that coming to terms with the discursive complexity of learning advising requires a way of living on, or dwelling, in these ruins by recognising it as a discursive space. Readings (1996, p129) suggests that dwelling in the ruins requires ‘a serious attention to the present complexity of its space, undertaking an endless work of detournement of the spaces willed to us by a history whose temporality we no longer inhabit’. By detournement, Readings is referring to the need to recognise the ruins one inhabits as something that cannot be reduced, rebuilt or destroyed, but as a complex space one must learn to put to new uses. From this perspective, learning advising cannot be reduced to a single ‘unified ideological function’ (Readings, 1996, p125). For its practitioners, this means treating attachments to ideals as provisional, tentative, fleeting.

Such a way of being in the world is said to induce a certain type of mourning as opposed to melancholy. Brown (1999, 2003b) draws on Freud to discern the difference between melancholy and mourning. Melancholia entails ‘a loss of a more ideal kind [than mourning]. The object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love’ (Freud, 1917 in Brown, 1999, p20). Further, the melancholic subject tends to be ‘low in self-regard, despairing... [because he/she] has shifted the reproach of the once loved object (a reproach waged for not living up to the idealization by the beloved) onto itself’ (p21). To illustrate this from my own experience, my own melancholy arose out of my sense of failure as an ‘agent of change’ and in this, I lost my work as an object of love and transferred this feeling to my self. However, because melancholy arises from the loss of an ideal (Brown, 1999), it only persists because of one’s attachment to that ideal. As Brown (1999, p19) suggests, melancholy is the state of being ‘attached more to a particular political analysis or ideal—even to the failure of that ideal—than to seizing possibilities for radical change in the present’. It is only attachment that stands in the way of moving on.

The required response is to turn the counter-productive state of melancholy into a productive site of mourning, where new possibilities present themselves in the experience of loss. Whereas melancholy derived from my sense of loss and failure as an agent of change, I was
able to begin to mourn when I came to recognise the agent of change as an institutional phantasm. This thesis is the product of that mourning where I have been able to use my own intellectual work to make sense of the learning advisor as a ‘ruined’ modernist project, unstable and historically ‘rereferentialised’, a play of contradictions and failed programs of reform. Brown (1999) describes the condition of mourning beautifully in the following paragraph:

The condition of mourning is a stumbling and stuttering one, a condition of disturbed ground, of inarticulateness, of disorientation in and about time. A mourning being must learn to walk again, on ground once made level by the now lost object, a process that makes palpable how contingent firm and level ground always is. Indeed, in mourning, one discovers horizons, banisters, firmaments and foundations of life so taken for granted that they were mostly unknown until they were shaken. A mourning being also learns a new temporality, one in which past meets future without moving through a present (in which the present all but vanishes) yet also one in which the future is unmoored from parts of the past, thus puncturing conceits of linearity with a different way of living time. (pp5-6).

Drawing on the work of Cary (2004) and Lather (2003), I suggest that the intellectual work I have completed in this thesis has been a process of ‘deconstructive destabilisation’. I have presented an ‘archive of windows’ on being a learning advisor that demonstrate ‘the histories of enframing’ and ‘the staging of truthfulness’ (Lather, 2003, p260). I have deliberately undermined the centrality of terms like agency, diversity, empowerment and transformation in the contemporary learning advising project. I have also undermined the stability of the ethical remit of the learning advisor in order to mourn the loss of an ideal, thereby creating a space in which ‘to rethink and re-engage’ in political and ethical practice (Cary, 2004, p333).

It is my understanding that a politics of freedom requires one to engage in a discursive space characterised by ‘a rhythm of attachment and detachment’ (Readings, 1997), where we, as institutional practitioners, critically engage with the regimes of truth that govern our behaviour, enframe our visions of the future and rewrite our past. This is a space that makes no claim to alibis or consolations in the future.
No alibis – Living with a commitment to thought

Readings (1996, 1997) introduces the notion of working without alibis when he suggests that we need to engage in a kind of institutional pragmatism that involves both the recognition that ‘the complexity and historically marked status of the spaces in which we are situated’ are beyond redemption and habitation, and that there can be no ‘new rationale [that] will allow us to reduce that complexity, to forget present complexity in the name of future simplicity’ (p129). The challenge is to work with this complexity by living ‘without belief but with a commitment to thought’ (Readings, 1997, p381). By maintaining a commitment to thought, I draw on the work of Foucault (Foucault, 1997b) who suggests, in ‘Polemics, politics and problematisations’:

Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem. (p117)

By this, Foucault implies a form of reflexivity that is capable of creating a distance between ourselves and that which we are expected to regard as self-evident and do as a matter of course. It implores us to hold these things up for analysis, to identify their assumptions, history, rationality, and ultimately, to examine the implications of thinking in this way, at this time, in relation to whom, and at what cost.

Whereas belief might be understood as a faithful commitment to ideals and categories of existence that provide the necessary ‘horizons, banisters, firmaments and foundations of life’ (Brown, 2003, pp5-6) that have always guided our actions, thought ‘does away with alibis’ (Readings, 1996, p129), by which he means ‘ceasing to justify our practices in the name of an idea from 'elsewhere', an idea that would release us from responsibility for our immediate actions’ (Readings, 1996, p129). The notion of thought is central here. For Foucault (1977b), ‘thinking does not provide consolation or happiness’ (p192): the challenge is to maintain thought within the realm of paradox rather than taking respite in the reassurances of unity. In Theatrum Philosphicum, Foucault asks
What if thought freed itself from commonsense and decided to function only in terms of its extreme singularity? What if it adopted the disreputable bias of the paradox, instead of complacently accepting its citizenship in the doxa? What if it conceived of difference differentially, instead of searching out the common elements underlying difference? (Foucault, 1977b, p182)

What, for example, would result from thinking about learning advising acategorically or about student difference differentially? I take Foucault’s advice here,

The most tenacious subjection of difference is that maintained by categories. By showing the number of different ways in which being can express itself, by specifying its forms of attribution, by imposing in a certain way the distribution of existing things, categories create a condition where being maintains its undifferentiated repose at the highest level. Categories organise the play of affirmations and negations, establish the legitimacy of resemblances within representation, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts. They suppress the anarchy of difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights, and prescribe their task of specification with respect to individual beings. On one side, they can be understood as the \textit{a priori} forms of knowledge, but, on the other, they appear as an archaic morality, the ancient decalogue that the identical imposed upon difference. Difference can only be liberated through the invention of acategorical thought. (Foucault, 1977b, p186)

Putting thought to good use means doing away with blind commitment to ideals and categories of difference in order to work with the complexity of the space and affordances in which one is engaged. It is a refusal of panaceas (Cary 2004). And as Taylor (1990, p70) once argued from within the field, ‘if our work is shorn of methodological pretension and of claims to propositional certitudes about how to learn, we are able to conceive of ourselves quite firmly as embodiments of that practical knowledge I have attempted to explain - provided always that we are prepared to engage seriously with the same problems of understanding the subject matter faced by our students’.

To recognise learning advising as a ‘ruined’ modernist project is to recognise that its foundational assumptions about progress, agency, collaborative practices, and empowerment are populist assumptions given to us through the discourses of organisational life (Cary 2004). Change agency, for example, is a project that assumes a stable system that can be changed through the agency of the actor according to the philosophy of incrementalism. I relate this particular idea to what Connolly refers to as ‘serene phenomenology’. Connolly suggests of serene phenomenology that ‘it presupposes a relatively stable and serene context of self-
identity, social practice, state and inter-state relations, and temporal projection’ (p19). It also presumes ‘first, a close alignment between the identity it seeks to realise and socially available possibilities of self-formation and, second, a shared sense of confidence in the world we are building, a confidence that links the present to the future through effort and anticipation at one time and memory and appreciation at another’ (pp18-19). Living with learning advising as a modernist project in ruins also requires that we learn to live without such consolations in the future.

No consolations – Substituting contingency for mastery

Connolly (1991, p35) suggests that ‘to focus the eye of freedom … is … to rethink the perverse relation between the late-modern experience of global contingency and the modern drive to master contingency through the intensified organisation of life’. For the learning advisor, either as agent of redemption or agent of change, the late modern experience of global contingency undermines the modernist drive to bring about developmental change through the empowerment of individuals and the progress of reason in a stable system with stable genres and assumed agency to affect cultural change through a process of incrementalism (Brown, 2003b; Cary, 2004; Connolly, 1991). To recognise learning advising as a ruined modernist project is to understand that existing notions of progress within the field have a direct relationship with educational reform that we consider closely aligned to our own sense of what the future should hold.

Change lies not in the future, or in another more ideal or strategic practice, but right here in the practice in which I engage, right here where ethical and political agency play out in decisive moments. For Readings (1997) then, dwelling in the ruins is simply ‘to try to do what we can, while leaving the space for what we cannot envisage to emerge’ (p381), and ‘attempting to make things happen within a system without claiming that such events are the true, real meaning of the system’ (p381).

I suggest that rather than engaging in a politics that problematises our lack of identity, value and expertise and/or attempts to capture difference in order to gain some mastery over variation, it is more important to engage in a ‘deconstructive politics…that has no intention of imposing a successor regime’ (St Pierre, 2004, p331). This kind of politics entails
problematising, as Connolly (1991) suggests, ‘established realisms and idealisms [and]… insists upon the ambiguity of identity, and struggles to draw political implications from this complex appropriate to contemporary circumstances’ (p173). One of the most important aspects is to trouble the received, to create ethical disruptions in what is given and what we are invited to ‘know’, ‘do’ and ‘be’. In discussing strategies of freedom in a control society, Watson (2010) suggests

...we need, as practitioners, to develop meta-awareness of the discursive practices through which our own subjectivities are forged. We also need to understand our role in shaping the subjectivities of others, to understand how policy discourses function in deterritorializing and reterritorializing the spaces of practice, becoming normalized and giving rise to the policy/practice gap as the locus for the ambivalent accident. (Watson, 2010, p102)

And yet, as practitioners, we require a sense of hope as a way of keeping on. Brown’s (2003) incitement in this area is to work the ‘political ground between post-revolutionary despair or paralysis and resignation to liberal reformism itself no longer convincing in its narrative of incrementalism’ (p15). Importantly, she advocates combining radical democratic critique with a utopian imaginary that can ‘survive stumbling, disorientation, disappointment and even failure … so that the impulse remains incitational of thought and possibility rather than turning fundamentalist’ (p15). She suggests this requires an active separation of the critical impulse from immediate institutional and historical solutions, such that the impulse survives. I suggest this requires working at the fractures between what is received as what is possible. In this sense, learning advising can be understood as ‘a setting to work’ (Lather, 2003).

6.3 Learning advising as ‘setting to work’

To bring this section to a close, I draw on the work of Lather (2003) to consider how learning advising might be understood as set between ‘an ungraspable call [to idealised ethical practices] and a setting to work’, as we negotiate the paradoxes of the contemporary university and the impossibilities of fulfilling temporary political and theoretical ideals. I argue that maintaining the critical impulse in the face of institutional deployment and failure without falling into despair is part of the reflexive work we must continue to do. By this, I mean that as practitioners we must maintain the will to ‘make a difference’ while we continue to trouble the kind of difference we are invited to make. This ethical work does not ground its
politics in a foundational subject or work with binaries of right/wrong, good/bad, remedial/developmental. Rather it is what McNay (2009) refers to as a ‘liminal process which seeks to explore ways of being beyond the already known’ (p55). In Foucault’s words, this involves the permanent critique of what we are as ‘an historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them’ (1984b, p50 in McNay, 2009, p66). Setting to work then involves an ethos of transgression that works with and against constraints and deployments in order to find ever new ways of being ‘other’ than what we are, and by keeping identity in play (St Pierre, 2004).

At the heart of this study is the demonstration that learning advising lacks a clear or stable referent in terms of its function or value. What this thesis demonstrates is that the local contingencies we seek to master on a daily basis are beyond our mastery because they emerge and deflate amid broader global contingencies beyond our control, and internally enable and derail at a local level. Each ideal is thwarted at the very promise of it being fulfilled, whether it involves ‘being valued’, ‘locating ourselves centrally’, ‘being an educational expert’, ‘developing an academic literacy pedagogy’ or ‘embedding academic literacy’. For this reason, learning advising can be seen as a modernist project in ruins - the site of failure. We work according to the logic of progress and reason, of strategy, collaboration, adoption, improvement, development and ownership, but our experience is one of rupture, failure and new beginnings. The point is to suggest that perhaps this is not a bad thing. Working with failure is the site of possibility, reinvention, difference and freedom. The game is to maintain the ‘will to make a difference’ while keeping categories of identity and difference in play.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The motivation for this thesis emerged out of two inter-related concerns about learning advising in the academy. The first concern came from my experience of what I have referred to as an ‘agentic complex’. This was induced by two experiences: the experience and observation of ‘failure’ as an agent of change in the academy; and the ontological stammering induced by my growing recognition that this particular ‘ethical’ agency was not identical to another expected ethical agency – what I have come to call ‘the agent of redemption’. This stammering led me to question the intelligibility of change agency, to trace its surface of emergence, to examine its rationality and consider it against the other expectations of me as an institutional practitioner. I was compelled to ask: How have we been invited to constitute ourselves as ethical agents in the academy? If we believe that we are employed to ‘make a difference’, exactly what difference are we invited to make? How has this changed across time? And what is the legacy of these changes today?

The second concern about learning advising that motivated this thesis related to what I was observing as the normalising tendencies of the ‘will to truth’ as my field engaged in professionalisation and the politics of articulating identity, expertise and contribution. Because of my experience mentioned above, I sought to destabilise the professional ‘will to truth’ and ask how we might make sense of a field that makes sense in multiple ways; that, on the one hand, provides the political wherewithal to engage in negotiations over identity, and on the other, avoids too readily drawing boundaries around the work and keeps identity in play. In order to describe the learning advising subject as an effect of discourse characterised by dispersion and contingency, I asked: How have we come to constitute ourselves in various and particular ways? According to which historical regimes of truth? And how does this shape who we are in the present?

These two related concerns led me to attempt to make sense of the discursive complexity of the learning advisor in a way that could diagnose the ethical agency of the learning advisor as both agent and effect of truth and power in the academy. To do this, I drew on the conceptual and analytical tools of governmentality, genealogy, and archaeology to examine the historical constitution of the learning advisor, and to do this in a way that could trace the visible fractures in the learning advising subject and uncover their conditions of emergence.
Beginning with the question, ‘what is the learning advisor in this particular historical moment?’ the thesis asked the three questions of historical ontology:

- How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge? (truth)
- How are we constituted as subjects who exercise and submit to power? (power)
- How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions? (ethics)

By engaging with these questions, this thesis isolated and traced the emergence and circulation of four distinct discursive ‘developments/displacements’ in the historical constitution of the learning advisor. Rather than providing a definitive history, the thesis revealed a field of practice profoundly embedded in the social regulation of conduct in the academy. It demonstrated how learning advising can be seen as an important technology of reform in the academy concerned with disciplining difference and regulating autonomy in the student body.

To demonstrate historical contingency and difference within the field, the analysis in Chapter Four demonstrated how the learning advisor first appeared as a therapeutic intervention for the academic casualty as the university became harnessed as an apparatus of government amid concerns about the post-war reconstruction and the conservative social liberal principle of ‘equality of opportunity’. In ACT-I, these historical conditions saw student failure problematised and diagnosed as a psycho-social condition of the individual and his/her family which required a therapeutic form of remediation. This particular historical constitution was then juxtaposed with the learning advisor as ‘educational intervention for the social casualty’ in ACT-II as the conditions shifted to a more radical equality politics, and difference became diagnosed in terms of socio-cultural factors requiring remedial educational, especially language and literacy intervention, targeting the social group. While the shift from ACT-I to ACT-II demonstrated a minor rupture in the historical constitution of the learning advisor, both were shown to occur within a social liberal government concerned with the discipline of difference, be it psycho-social or socio-cultural. And both diagnoses are shown to have salience in the deployment, narrative and practice of the learning advisor today.

The discipline of difference in the individual and social group was then demonstrated to recede in Chapter Five, ACT-III and ACT-IV, where a marked transformation in the historical constitution of the learning advisor was shown to take place as neoliberal rationality...
came to reframe the ‘social’ and the ‘citizen’ and the logic of the marketplace took precedence. Unlike social liberalism, which was concerned with the discipline of difference, neoliberalism was shown to be more concerned with regulating autonomy and responsibility in the population by working on the learning environment in ways that proliferate and venerate ‘choice’ and ‘performance’ as the objects of freedom. In the two ACTs, the ‘curriculum intervention for the lifelong learner’, and ‘the administrative/ pedagogical intervention for the Graduate’ identify a significant rupture in the practices of learning advisors as the locus of their practices shifts further from therapeutic dimensions in which they were originally constituted. As these layers fold across each other in the present, the learning advisor becomes a hybrid character of the university whose remit to ‘make a difference’ becomes epistemologically, ontologically and ethically complex. Importantly, this complexity is shown to be not a problem that is rectified through greater professionalisation, regulation and standardisation within the field, but a source of professional possibility and freedom to ‘make a difference’ in multiple ways.

In providing the above analysis, this thesis has demonstrated that what constitutes a ‘sensible’ identity, and how learning advisors make sense to their institution and of themselves, is contingent on the nexus of knowledge, power and ethics which frame the games of truth in which they participate. It has shown how ‘making a difference’ is not a universal claim, but a political act that can be seen as an effect of historical versions of the truth about civil society, higher education and the higher education student.

This thesis is underpinned by a number of arguments. The first argument is that governmentality is an instructive lens to examine the contingency of the ethical agency of the learning advisor. The lens of governmentality allows us to diagnose developments/displacements in the learning advisor’s ethical agency as an effect of shifts in historico-political reasoning about civil society, the problematisation of the academy and the representation of the higher education student. Through this lens, learning advising appears as a technology of reform concerned with the government of conduct in the academy: a discursive and institutional field of practice concerned with the higher education student as the object of government. By decentring learning advising as the object of analysis through this lens, it reappears as an effect of the historical and political constitution of the subject of higher education – the student. The lens of governmentality frames each of the discursive formations that are traced in this thesis through the use of historical ontology.
The second argument is that historical ontology provides one useful means for making sense of learning advising as a complex interplay of distinct forms of historical, epistemological and political difference. Enabled by genealogical design and archaeological erudition, the framework of historical ontology was used to examine learning advising as historical phenomena, to demonstrate its ‘inventedness’, and to fragment the present in order to make the familiar strange. This was achieved through the genealogical design which isolated and traced the surface of emergence of four discursive formations that provided new ways of problematising and representing the subject of higher education. To trace the surface of emergence, each ‘development’ was located in its historical context according to the convergence of historical circumstance, political rationality and the production of knowledge that reconfigured the university as an apparatus of government and reconstituted the subjectivity of the higher education student as an object of government. These were shown to produce visible developments/displacements in the historical constitution of the learning advisor.

The third argument of this thesis, based on the analysis provided by the above, is that learning advising in the present is a complicated and contested discursive space marked by the saturation of historical, political, theoretical and institutional layers of meaning pertaining to academic student learning assistance. This was demonstrated by the deliberate juxtaposition of four different historical versions of learning advising, which were shown to be folded into the narratives of learning advisors in the present. It is argued that working this space creates a professional complex for learning advisors in the present as they negotiate a complicated identity from moment to moment. It also creates complications for professionalisation and the standardisation of knowledge and practice.

A fourth argument is that despite the continuities created by the ‘will to make a difference’ in the profession, the ethical remit of the agent of redemption and the agent of change are not identical. The agent of redemption emerged out of a social liberal political rationality that saw the therapeutic/educational expertise of student learning assistance target the ‘difference’ in the individual and social group. The agent of change, on the other hand, comes from a neoliberal rationality that is concerned with regulating autonomy and responsibility in the population irrespective of difference by targeting the affordances created by the learning environment. In the latter case, the locus of practice shifts from assisting individuals to working on the curriculum and higher education teachers.
The final argument is that because the intelligibility of the learning advisor is wholly contingent on the discursive space afforded by the kind of formations described above, we must recognise our work as political and our agency as contingent. This contingency is shown to both enable and derail the ethical ‘ideals’ of learning advising work at a global and local level. In this case, we must learn to live with the impossibilities of this work – to maintain a critical impulse that does away with a commitment to establishing identity and works with the affordances that this discursive space provides. Further, if we recognise learning advising not as a given and sensible field, but a space of possibilities and transgression, then learning advising might be regarded as an important institutional praxis whose intelligibility folds in and through the contingencies and exigencies within which the university finds itself.

This thesis has been produced as a project of freedom concerned with tracing the limits of thought in learning advising and seeking a way of making sense of its discursive complexity in the present. The rationale to find a politics and ethical agency that transgresses the received is actioned, at least initially, in the writing of this thesis. This was achieved by employing the conceptual and methodological tools offered by Foucault in his work on governmentality, genealogy and archaeology to examine the historical constitution of the learning advisor at the intersection of truth, power and ethics in the academy, and as an effect of the problematisation and representation of the subject of higher education and the object of practice.

This brings us to the limitations of this thesis. On the one hand, this thesis espouses the need to keep things in play, and on the other, it has stabilised its concepts, methods, and tools in order to write a linear and coherent account. This thesis has not and has not sought to provide a comprehensive analysis of learning advising in Australian higher education. It constitutes one partial and political viewpoint which seeks to engage in a dialogue within the field about who we are, what we do, and what our value might be. Rather than providing anything definitive, however, the thesis is more concerned with asking: How have we been historically constituted? How do we engage in games of truth about our identity and expertise? And how does this play out for the learning advisor in the present? If this thesis goes someway to opening a different kind of conversation about these things, then it has been successful in its aim. As a learning advisor, my political and ethical work involves consistently examining how I am invited to engage in the politics of truth, to what ends and at what costs? This is not a concern driven by professional insecurity, but a critical (im)pulse that sustains its beat despite the stumbling ground of the institutional practitioner.
To each dimension, as, with the flight of time, it disappears from view, we should say: now you are becoming the Past. But possibly later at a critical – perhaps fortunate – moment we may meet again on a new dimension, and once again you may become the Present.

Paul Klee
Addendum

During the writing of this thesis, an ‘education revolution’ was promised by the new Labor government in Australia in 2007. Although this so called ‘revolution’ appeared to embody a return to social liberal principles that we saw in Chapter Four, such as a concern for the socially disadvantaged, this is not a simple case of history repeating itself. At the international level, the techniques and strategies of comparative education have never been so thorough. In 2010, the message for member countries of the OECD is to maintain their competitive stance among education systems through greater attention to the international benchmarking of standards. The OECD Education at a Glance Report suggests

In a global economy, it is no longer improvement by national standards alone, but the best performing education systems internationally that provide the benchmark for success. Success will go to those individuals and nations which are swift to adapt. The task of governments will be to ensure that countries rise to this challenge. (OECD, 2010a, p15)

In Australia, this imperative can be seen to be taken very seriously. The Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley, et al., 2008), which was commissioned and released under the new Labor Government, was largely justified by the fact that Australia was once again seen to be in a situation of ‘competitive disadvantage’ in relation to other OECD member countries according to the performance criteria for economic competitiveness established at a transnational level. Among its recommendations is the need to increase public investment, establish a set of public performance indicators for the ‘assessment of how well the Australian tertiary education system is performing against other countries’ to benchmark the performance of Australia’s higher education system against ‘The OECD countries whose systems are of the best quality and with highest performance’ (Bradley, et al., 2008, pxi).

The emphasis today is not just on the quality of Graduate, but the proportion of the population that can be identified as educated and work-ready for the global knowledge economy, as stated in the Review:

Australia is falling behind other countries in performance and investment in higher education. Developed and developing countries alike accept there are strong links between their productivity and the proportion of the population with high-level skills. These countries have concluded that they must invest not only to encourage a major increase in the numbers of the population with degree-level qualifications but also to
improve the quality of graduates. Australia is losing ground. Within the OECD we are now 9th out of 30 in the proportion of our population aged 25 to 34 years with such qualifications, down from 7th a decade ago. Twenty nine per cent of our 25- to 34-year-olds have degree-level qualifications but in other OECD countries targets of up to 50 per cent have already been set. These policy decisions elsewhere place us at a great competitive disadvantage unless immediate action is taken. (Bradley, et al., 2008, pxi)

The Review weaves together a number of concerns that we have looked at historically in this thesis. In particular, it problematises public investment in higher education and the participation of under-represented groups, especially those from a lower socio-economic section of the population. Rather than simply being a case of history repeating itself, however, these ‘old’ problematisations are occurring in a significantly different discursive and regulatory environment. This new environment is the outcomes-driven, evidence-based and performative university where risk and desire are managed in ever tightening circles.

The Government response to this Review included a policy document called Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System which envisioned a ‘student-centred demand-driven higher education system’ (DEEWR, 2010), aimed to ‘be in the top group of OECD countries in terms of participation and performance’ (p7), and promised to introduce ‘at-risk performance funding for universities’ (DEEWR, 2010). While it is possible to assume that this ‘at-risk’ funding pertains to the under-represented student cohort in transition, it could also pertain to the organisation, which itself has been identified at risk of competitive disadvantage. In this climate, one of the most important control strategies - performance funding - is likely to be taken to new levels, as universities ‘enter into an agreement to meet institutional performance targets for teaching and learning quality, which could include measures of student engagement, and participation by under-represented groups’ (DEEWR, 2010).

Correspondingly, the imperative to demonstrate performance intensifies the space of accountability, measurement and reporting. As the pressure to include greater numbers of ‘under-represented groups’ and demonstrate outcomes mounts, learning advisors will be called on to recuperate and reinvent aspects of ourselves as we attempt to maintain legitimacy as the next wave of truth/being plays out in the contemporary Australian higher education context. What needs to be discerned critically in all of this is precisely what is being problematised and represented as requiring what kind of intervention, in whose interests, and at what costs?
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